

Retired Air Force Fire Chiefs' Network
QUARTERLY NETWORK NEWS



*Legendary Pioneers Who Reminisce About the Past
But Focus on the Future*

Editor: Hoyd "Sandy" Sanders, Sandy6T5@comcast.net
Associate Editor: Charlie Richardson, clardb@695online.com

<http://www.dodfire.com/Retirees.htm>



Volume 1

Founded by Doug Courchene

January-March 2009

It is now time to publish the first QNN for 2009. Wow! Where does time go? A few days ago an old friend called to chat. We shared a room in the barracks at Clark Air Base, Republic of the Philippines, 1965-1966. It was the first time we had talked since then. As we were talking one of us asked "how long has it been?" We could not believe it had been almost forty-four years ago. As we talked it seemed strange we were not renewing old acquaintances, but it was like we just picked up where we left off so many years ago. I certainly believe these type experiences are what make being associated with Air Force Fire and Emergency Services so special. All of us during our careers facilitated friendships which will go with us to the grave. For those that remember those hours on line standby, ramp patrol, leisure time in the fire stations, and responding as a close knit team to numerous aircraft and structural fire emergencies that placed us in harm's way, we all developed strong bonds of friendship with those we served with. I certainly want to work with each of you to continue making the Quarterly Network Newsletter an avenue whereby readers can find that spirit of camaraderie through the sharing of information and experiences. (Hoyd "Sandy" Sanders Sandy6T5@Comcast.net)

Clarence J. Martell was Born 13 March 1925 in Somerset, Wisconsin. The first 14 years of his life were spent on the family farm and going to school in a one-room schoolhouse. At age 15 he started working in a meat packing house making 35 cents an hour. On 7 December 1942 he joined the Navy as a Motor Machinist Mate. Much of



his time in the Navy was spent on a minesweeper. He spent a total of 3 years, 5 months, and 7 days in the Navy before leaving them in 1946. After his tour with the Navy he did some real estate speculation with one of his brothers where they would purchase properties, fix them up, and resell them for profit. He did that for approximately 10 months. In late 1946 he joined the Air Force. He served in Fire Protection and attained the rank of Senior Master Sergeant (E-8). On 1 April 1966 after 21 years, 10 months, and 17 days he retired. During his tenure in the Air Force Fire Protection Program, he was very active in planning firefighting and rescue drills. One drill he facilitated involved the utilization of a mockup of a J-47 engine. This realistic exercise proved very effective in training firefighters to cope with engine fires. His efforts in this critical training received recognition from his Commanding Officer. Throughout his career he actively participated in all aspects of education and training. He was well qualified in special weapons and served as a member of a Nuclear Weapon Emergency Response Team. His service in the Air Force took him to many parts of the world, including Panama, Germany,



Austria, Japan, France, Hawaii, Texas, and California. While serving in the Air Force he met and married his wife of 57 years, Maria, from Austria. Their oldest son, John, was born in Austria; their second son, Dennis, was born in Japan, daughter, Debbie, was born in the Territory of Hawaii, and youngest daughter, Linda, was born in the Hawaii. During his time in the Air Force he earned a High School diploma in 1960. After retiring from the Air Force, he worked as a Psyche Technician in the Camarillo State Hospital until he retired on 1 July 1987. His love for learning did not end with his retirement. He spent years researching and studying many of the things he loved including health, politics, religion, and financial issues. The things he learned, he passed on both verbally and in the form of printouts to his wife, children, grandchildren, and friends.

Rodney Hugh Winningham Chief Master Sergeant, United States Air Force (Ret'd). Born 16 January 1936 in Fentress County, Tennessee. Died 17 April 2009 in Panama City, Florida. He proudly served his country for thirty years (1958 -1988) in



the US Air Force. Additionally, he served with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and retired after ten years of service. Rodney was preceded in death by his beloved wife of forty years, Dimple (Poore) Winningham; parents, D.W. "Webb" and Stella Winningham; infant sister, Clella Winningham; father and mother-in-law, Lucian and Mandy Poore; brothers-in-law, Olen, Kenneth, and Hollis Poore; and niece, Laura Finn. He is survived by son, Olen Winningham (Melinda), Nashville, Tennessee; daughter, Kimberly (John) Luther, Keystone Heights, Florida; and grandsons, Christopher and Matthew. Also survived by sisters, Clata (Gerald) Finn, Crossville, Tennessee and Dolores (Herbert) York, Muncie, Indiana; brothers Arnold (Dee) Winningham and Eugene (Stella) Winningham, all of Fentress County, Tennessee; sisters-in-law Doris (Louie) Hull, Fentress County, Tennessee, and Nell (William E.) Reeves, Murfreesboro, Tennessee; brothers-in-law Oliver (Sharon) Poore, Harris (Martha) Poore,

Kyle (Doris) Poore, Aaron (Connie) Poore, and sister-in-law Judy Poore, all of Fentress County, Tennessee; many devoted nieces, nephews, cousins and other family members, as well as his church family and friends at Parker First Baptist Church. The family would like to thank the staff of Bay Medical Center in Panama City, Florida, especially nurse Billie Waddell of the Medical Intensive Care Unit, and the staff of Covenant Hospice. Funeral services were held in Fentress County, Tennessee, on Wednesday, April 22. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Parker First Baptist Church, 4630 East Business Highway 98, PO Box 10301, Panama City, Florida 32404 or The American Cancer Society.

Sandy, I am so sorry to hear about Rodney's passing. I just talked to him last week and ask him to stop by. He was a great guy and he will be missed by many. (James R. Legg, CMSgt, USAF (Ret'd) leggman10@cs.com)

I am sad to hear about Chief Winningham passing. He was a great Chief who served the Air Force with pride and integrity. He will be missed. (Duane Morgan FireChiefOne@aol.com)

Sandy, this is truly sad news. Rod was such a nice person, well respected, and a good friend who never had a terse word. He will certainly be missed by those of us who knew him well. (George Hall CMSgt (Ret'd) IFAC@COX.NET)

Sandy this is very sad. Rodney was a supporter of quarterly newsletter from the beginning. I had no idea he had cancer. Our prayers go out for the family. (Doug Courchene CMSgt (Ret'd) Dougecourchene@aol.com)

Thanks Sandy for letting me know about Chief Winningham ...He was a goodin! (Ben Partin CMSgt (Ret'd) bpartin@cox.net)

Sandy, this is a shock! Rod used to take care of my pickup truck ('Old Blue' he called it). We certainly will be praying for his family. (Wade Grimm, CMSgt (Ret'd) wade.grimm.ctr@hanscom.af.mil)

Editor's Note: I had the opportunity to work several years with CMSgt Rodney Winningham. What an awesome person he was. He and I traveled together to many locations throughout the Air Force. Rod loved his family. No matter where in the world we might be at a given time, he would always want to talk about home and spoke with loving respect about his wife Dimple, his daughter Kim, and his son Olen. His homespun humor was a tool he used very effectively when working difficult issues. I recall one occasion when I was working a very serious issue that had been elevated to a United States Senator. I asked Rodney to give me his thoughts as to what direction I should take. The response I got from him was a jewel. In his Tennessee drawl he said "Sandy don't worry about the mule being blind just load up the wagon and shake the lines." Rod I will certainly miss you. Hoyd "Sandy" Sanders CMSgt (Ret'd)
Sandy6T5@comcast.net

Ralph D. "Mack" McHenry, age 70, Stover MO, passed away Monday, 23 March 2009, at the Lake Regional Health System in Osage Beach, MO. Ralph was born 12



August 1938 in Cole Center, Pennsylvania, the son of the late Elwin Clair and Marguerite E. Wilkins McHenry. On 22 July 1962 in Tuscarawas, Ohio, he was united in marriage to Joyce Roth. They have 2 children: son Duane from Anchorage AK and daughter Elaine from Offutt, Nebraska. Mack served 29 years in the United States Air Force and was a fireman and eventually the fire chief for many years. He served as Fire Chief at Whiteman Air Force base in Knob Noster for 9 years before moving to the lake. He was a member of the Kent Memorial Church in Sunrise Beach, the Ausable River Lodge #149 F & A.M in New York, the American Legion Zack Wheat Post #624 in Sunrise Beach, the Osage Community Elks Lodge #2705 in Laurie, and the Moose Fraternity Lodge #1494 in Sedalia. He enjoyed playing golf, hunting, fishing, and bowling, and he loved spending time with his

grandchildren. Memorial services were held on March 28 at Kent Memorial Lutheran Church, in Sunrise Beach MO.

Chief, this I was not ready to see or hear! I served with Chief McHenry while at Barksdale AFB, LA; he came into a department that was fragmented and loaded with low morale. In short order he cleaned the department up, boosted morale, and made it a pleasure for people to come to work. He was not only a great Fire Chief but also a real person. I am saddened to hear of his passing--a great loss to his family and to all the Fire and Emergency Services folks. (Rick King Firecrash@cox.net)

Sandy, I didn't come to know Mack until after he retired from active duty. I know he worked at SAC Headquarters and served as Fire Chief in numerous locations while on active duty and as a civilian after retirement. I do know this: he was one of those very few folks who were instrumental in my career. He will certainly be missed. (Paul Kempton, CMSgt (Ret'd) chiefbills@sbcglobal.net)

How sad . . . the loss of Chief Ralph McHenry. After retirement as Chief at Whiteman, Ralph quietly settled away from it all. One of the finest has passed our way. (Doug Courchene, CMSgt (Ret'd) Dougcourchene@aol.com)

Editor's Note: I never had the opportunity to work with or for Chief McHenry, but we had many encounters concerning firefighting vehicles and firefighter training issues while he was at SAC Headquarters. I can say he never conducted himself less than a professional in any situation. I gained much respect for Ralph over the years and appreciate the many sacrifices he made in his service to our nation, the Air Force, and Fire and Emergency Services. Our thoughts and prayers go out for his wife Joyce, son Duane, and daughter Elaine during this difficult time. (Hoyd "Sandy" Sanders CMSgt (Ret'd) Sandy6T5@comcast.net)

Dan Pimpsner USAF (Ret'd) was born November 8, 1942, in Pittsburgh, PA to Jean and A. W. Pimpsner. He died April 16, 2009, in Lubbock, TX. Dan graduated from high school in Pittsburgh in 1961 and enlisted in the US Air Force. During his 20-year career, he was stationed in several



places, but the highlight of his career was the five years he spent at RAF Upper Heyford, England serving in a Search and Rescue Detachment as an Airborne Rescue Specialist flying on HH-43B Helicopters. His final duty station was Cannon AFB where he retired in 1981. Following his retirement he worked seven years with the Cannon AFB Fire Department and then worked 22 years at the Melrose Bombing Range. He was serving as the Range Control Officer at the time of his death. He was a 32nd Degree Mason and a member of Portales Lodge #26 AF&AM. On August 21, 1965, in Bangor ME, he married Mary LeVasseur. Dan was a very outgoing and friendly man who never met a stranger. He was extremely devoted to his family, especially his grandchildren. He enjoyed collecting things. Among his passions were coins, stamps, pocket watches and stray animals. He loved animals and fed every stray he saw. He was especially fond of dogs and cats, of which he had several. He is survived by Mary, his wife of more than 44 years of Portales; his son and daughter-in-law, Dan A. and Melissa Pimpsner of Portales; his daughter and son-in-law, Cathy and George Tidwell of Clovis; 5 grandchildren, Brandon Fenley, Colton Pimpsner, Tori Tucker, Erica Tidwell and Ethan Tidwell; his father, A. W. Pimpsner of Valencia PA; and a sister, Janet Pimpsner of Carnegie PA. He was preceded in death by his mother, Jean Pimpsner, and a brother, Carl Pimpsner. Funeral services were held 20 April 2009, at Sacred Heart Catholic Community Church in Clovis with Fr. Carlos Chavez officiating. Burial followed in the Portales Cemetery. Masonic rites were given by Portales Masonic Lodge. Military honors were rendered by the Cannon Air Force Base Honor Guard.

It was with great sadness when I learned of the passing of Dan Pimpsner. Dan had been fighting cancer for some time. Dan was a firefighter at Cannon AFB when I first arrived there in 1986. He left firefighting and became employed at Melrose Bombing/Gunnery Range around 1988. During his Air Force career in Fire and Emergency Services, he flew as an ABR (Flying Firefighter) on the HH-43A, B, and F models. Please pray for his family as they deal with this loss. (C.F. "Chuck" Hemphill hemper@suddenlink.net)

Editor's Note: I had the opportunity to serve as crew member on HH-43 Helicopters with Dan Pimpsner at RAF Upper Heyford, United Kingdom. You could never be around Dan without picking up on his keen sense of humor. When things were not going well, Dan could always find something funny to say or do. Evelyn and I enjoyed the time we spent with Dan and Mary and will be praying for the family during this difficult time. (Hoyd "Sandy" Sanders, CMSgt (Ret'd) Sandy6T5@comcast.net)

Edward Warren Kear Sr, 75, Bismarck, passed away peacefully on Friday May 1, 2009. Services were held at the Bismarck Funeral Home on Tuesday, 5 May 2009, at 11:00 a.m. Visitation was held one hour prior to the service and interment was at the North Dakota



Veterans Cemetery, rural Mandan. Ed was born on October 4, 1933, in Canandaigua, New York. He was raised and educated in the Finger Lakes region of upstate NY and joined the Marine Corps in 1951. On 21 April 1951, Ed married Elida Erickson in Rockville, MD. Eternally young at heart and proud of his years served as a Marine. "Semper Fi" Ed enjoyed traveling, fishing, golf, and in retirement, bowling. In 1993 Ed retired from his position as Fire Chief at McConnell AFB, Wichita, Kansas. Ed is survived by his wife, Elida, three children Edward (Tammy) Kear Jr, Mandan ND; Jonathan Kear, Minot ND and Linda (Mike) Holm, Maplewood MN; four grandchildren, Cassandra (Ryan) Blotske, Mandan ND; Christina (Travis) Kupper,

Dickinson ND; Pamela Holm, Inver Grove Hts MN and James Holm, Minneapolis MN; five great grandchildren, Carter, Ethan, and Kyler Blotske and Bailee and Kolton Kupper; two sisters Barbara (Walter) Murdock, Grand Junction CO and Marjorie (Hank) Kirsch, Rush NY.

READERS' COMMENTS

Sandy, good to see you are still keeping busy. That is, keeping the newsletter going. Larry Adams sent me the newsletter so if I could be added to the mailing list I would appreciate it. Larry and I are in Mesa, Arizona; well, he is on Val Vista and I am on Signal Butte. We have been golfing together a few times. I am going out to Luke for the air show this weekend and Chief Alimonda is going to let me park my camper near the fire station. They still have some great guys running your old stomping grounds. I retired from Minot on Halloween last year. I really missed the guys but am really glad I am retired. I am having a great time here in AZ. I left a lot of snow and cold at Minot. I hope everything is going good for you. I am going to try and make the Chief's conference. Hope to see you then. (Jim Clifford jlclifford@srt.com)

Sandy, Just a fast followup note to let you know that I have been reading the QNN that is posted on DOD FIRE. I remember when Chief Bobby Barrow passed away. I had met him at some kind of a military conference years ago and thought a lot of him. You have done a very good job with the newsletter, and I thank you for that and your service to our country. Talk to you more next week. Be safe. (Jimmie Van www.firetruks-atwar.com)

Sandy, thanks for the QNN. I enjoyed it very much. In fact it is the first I had received in a long time and a great issue. Thanks (O. B. Kyle)

Sandy, received your letter about the delay of the QNN. Hope you and your wife have resolved your health issues. Edna and I can surely understand health issues. That is what old age does to you. I hate getting old! I want to take this opportunity to thank you for stepping up to fill Doug Courchene's and Bob Barrow's shoes,

shoes that were hard to fill. It takes quite a person to please a bunch of old "has been folks." You're doing fine. Enclosed is a little stamp money. Keep up the good work! (Lennie Blau)

Sandy, again a superb job with newsletter. By the way how many readers do you have? I started with 38 and increased to 168 in 11 years. All were retired Fire Chiefs. The majority supported the newsletter with articles and contributions. I always had enough money to finance publication. Wonderful group! All but a few are gone. I do miss them of my generation. Take care (Doug Courchene CMSgt (Ret'd) Dougecourchene@aol.com)

Editor's note: As of today I have 596 readers on my e-mail distribution and 43 hard copy mailings. (Hoyd "Sandy" Sanders CMSgt (Ret'd) Sandy6T5@comcast.net)

Stamp Fund Contributors:



The QNN is privately funded by members' contributions. You have been more than generous to continue financially supporting the QNN. I want each of you that have and continue to contribute toward this effort to know it is very much appreciated. The contributors for this past quarter are: Charlie Richardson CMSgt (Ret'd), Chester Weger CMSgt (Ret'd), Ted Taipalus, Clarence O. Kyle CMSgt (Ret'd). Lennie Blau, Doug Courchene CMSgt (Ret'd), and Norris Adamson. Donations help defray postage and publishing costs (ink and paper), and they are voluntary as no membership fees are charged. We have several retirees and widows who do not have e-mail. I might add that this list is growing. A hard copy of the QNN is published and mailed to them by the US Mail service. Before publishing and mailing this issue we have \$508.90 in the treasurer. Contact the Editor for more

information or any assistance you would like to provide. Hoyd "Sandy" Sanders, 110 Kensington Court, Dothan, Alabama 36303 (334)-792-3521 Sandy6T5@Comcast.net .



The above is a picture of future USAF Fire Fighters at Greenville AFB MS May 1962. If anyone recognizes any of them, please let me know so we can contact them. (Charlie Richardson clardb@att.net)

LATE ENTRY

Chief, I read the Christmas stories in the last QNN, and they reminded me of one that I forgot and did not get sent in. Do you remember? The Squadron Children's Christmas Party was at the Luke fire station, and all of the children were having a great time. I remember one little girl who was having a problem with the crowd and was a little scared to join in the activities, and I talked her into doing the cake (present) walk, but she wanted me to walk with her. We went around the circle and you guessed it, she won a present. The smile on her face was something to see. A little later, Santa Claus arrived on an engine with lights flashing and sirens sounding and the children all yelling with big smiles on their faces. Santa waved to all and took his seat, and the children lined up for an opportunity to sit on his lap and tell their stories and wishes and receive a gift from Santa. About half way through the line, Santa called for the children of SMSgt Lou Alimonda to come forward. They were told to cover their eyes because Santa had a special delivery gift for them. Santa got up went into the fire station to get the special gift. Just a few minutes prior to this SMSgt Lou Alimonda (the

father of these children) had arrived from a tour in Honduras and that was the special delivery gift. When SMSgt Alimonda came out and his children saw what the gift was I do not think there was a dry eye in the firehouse, I also know personally that Santa had a tear in his eye. That is what Christmas is all about, a time for families to be together. Maybe you can place this in the, oh by the way, it showed up late. (Kim Bushong Deputy Fire Marshal Glendale AZ Fire Department KBushong@GLENDALEAZ.com)

A REUNION OF SORTS

It only took 47 years for the four of us to get together again but it was well worth it. Back in April/May 1962 we were fresh out of basic training and attending the USAF fire fighting school located at Greenville AFB MS. Greenville AFB was host to the Fire Fighting, Personnel, and Medical schools. It is located along the Mississippi River in upstate MS. We were just out of high school, and this was our first time away from home and the start of a new life. We were busy with the school and had little time for ourselves except for the weekends when we would go into town. At the graduation we all said that we would stay in touch with each other and we did for a while. A little over three years ago I received a phone call from Tony Desmond, and he invited Linde and me to join him and his wife Patti along with Bill and Rose Parsons and Frank & Deedee Jewell for a get tigher in Virginia Beach VA. The time was not good for Linde and me as we were going to be in Europe at the time. The next year they met in Myrtle Beach SC, but again at the time Linde and I were in Europe. Earlier this year we received a call and they were going to meet in Washington DC in March. So Linde and I packed up the car and headed to DC. On the way up Linde and I talked about the reunion and what it would be like. I had never met any of the wives so I had no knowledge about likes or dislikes of anyone. We met at the Olive Garden Restaurant as we all pulled into the parking lot at the same time. We all instantly recognized each other as time has been good to us. We sat and talked with each other, and the wives got acquainted; then we went back to the hotel and talked more and more. It was a fun-filled

weekend, and we all decided to keep in touch with each other and keep getting together once and maybe twice a year. Everyone was so friendly and instantly got along with each other that one night on the way out of the restaurant the couple next to us stopped us on the way out and commented that we must have been real good friends as we all got along so well. It was a fun-filled weekend with lots to talk about and get reacquainted again. If you ever have the opportunity to meet any of your GI friends, I strongly suggest it.



L/R Frank Jewell, Tony Desmond, Charlie Richardson, and Bill Parsons
(Charlie Richardson clardb@att.net)

**WHEN YOU THINK YOU HAVE SEEN IT
ALL,
THINK AGAIN**

I received a request from a mentor of mine, Chief Hoyd “Sandy” Sanders, to write an article about the large abandoned housing fire Travis AFB experienced in August 2008. To set the stage I’ll start with some facts and conditions. Travis AFB had a large amount of surplus housing after the base lost family housing authorizations. The base demolished units as funds became available. It was decided to start with the units on the bases interior close to occupied housing. This left 700 units on the west side of Cannon Blvd for the very end. The base cuts the weeds twice each summer and had accomplished this three weeks prior to the fire. I had requested all fire hydrants be kept active until demolition took place but understood water main breaks that required extensive repairs would probably not be repaired. When abandoned housing was fenced off, I requested a gate at all streets but due to the

expense we received gates only at strategic points. The gas lines and electricity for the occupied housing areas ran through this abandoned housing. Many houses had been abandoned for three years and had numerous breaches of doors and windows due to vandalism, training by base responders, and a paintball area. Demolition in this section of housing was to start two days after the fire occurred. During contingency discussions with Assistant Fire Chiefs we had decided to always respond a crash truck in addition to a strong structural response so we could quickly knock down any fires. The fire started in a vacant lot off base behind an off-base eating establishment. The vacant lot had weeds approximately two feet high and the city of Fairfield had served notice to the lot owner to cut the weeds. California was suffering its worst fire season in recorded history with the most acreage burned in any year. The fire started on 16 August at about 1600 hours underneath an abandoned lawn mower where it went from a smoldering phase to active fire due to wind conditions. The winds were 29 mph and were from the southwest when the fire was first reported. The 911 calls came in to both Travis and Fairfield fire departments. Both departments had stations less than two miles from the reported grass fire location. The Fairfield Fire Department dispatched an engine company, a Type 3 grass truck, and a Battalion Chief. The on-duty Travis Assistant Fire Chief responded directly off base with a rescue truck, a P-27 mini pumper, and an engine company. He dispatched an engine, a water tender, and a Striker crash truck to Armstrong Street in the abandoned housing area in case the fire came on base. A recall was initiated at which point I was notified of a grass fire in proximity to the base. I had all the confidence in the Assistant Fire Chief’s ability to handle any type of fire but decided I would swing by and render any help he might need since I was only four miles away. The fire had moved toward a high wall surrounding an off-base self-storage business. The fire quickly adjusted its direction straight in to the base when it hit that barrier. Upon my arrival I found at least two abandoned houses were on fire and the Travis Assistant Fire Chief and the Fairfield Battalion Chief had decided to

handle this as a Unified Command. I assumed Travis' Command functions, called for a fourth alarm, and inquired if there were enough recalled personnel in the station to staff the Ladder Truck. Five recalled firefighters picked up the ladder truck and headed straight to the Youth Center. I called for two P-23 crash trucks to proceed toward the housing area because this was a very fast moving fire. This left two P-23s on the flightline for aircraft protection. I called for the Emergency Operations Center to be stood up and the electricity and gas to be shut off in the affected area. The off-base mobile command post arrived at our command location with personnel from the Office of Emergency Services. At this point I talked with my off-base counterpart, and we decided to move our operation on to the base at a large field across Cannon Blvd. I advised off-base agencies that this was abandoned housing so we could focus on straight firefighting operations. I also established a cordon around the fire that I wanted to maintain. This cordon would protect the exposures that we had which were the Youth Center, the Chapel Center, Child Development Center, and Center Elementary School. Security Forces personnel shut down Cannon Blvd to through traffic and advised housing occupants to go to a "shelter in place" configuration with air conditioning off and windows closed. Electricity and gas were shut down, but we experienced numerous gas-fed fires due to seals not holding or compromised lines. Here's where we stood: Mobile Command Post is cross wind in secure field with personnel working communications issues and also Sheriff's dispatcher on duty, cordon by Security Forces established, electricity and gas shut off, two units off base working small fires, fire units were deployed to keep fire contained to abandoned housing area and away from exposures, special units at each of the above named exposures, and six divisions within the fire area with three assigned fire safety officers. The six divisions involved in active firefighting were on every street with multiple units. We were also at a six alarm condition at this point. We had an ambulance standing by, a POL truck to resupply all on/base vehicles, Emergency Management and Bio-Environmental engaged in air monitoring,

and the Emergency Operations Center stood up. Shutting down the electricity in the affected area also killed power in all base housing as well as gas being cut off. EOC stood up Family Readiness Center to render aid to families. Base Public Affairs as well as Fairfield Fire Prevention personnel kept the news media informed. The next things to happen were: I called Emergency Operations Center for a recall of 349th Reserve firefighters, called for two Civil Engineer 1500-gallon water tenders to report to staging, called for Civil Engineer heavy equipment to come to staging, made a Red Cross request for food for 125 firefighters (that's how many we had at the time). and made a similar request for 125 meals to Services. I also called for lighting and porta-potties at the Command/Staging areas. The winds that had started at 29 mph were up to 39 mph. The next significant events were the Wing Commander freed the last two crash trucks off the flightline so we had them keep the cordon intact. We had the two CE water tenders open their rear side discharges and drive up and down Cannon making mud from the street to about 15 feet inside the perimeter. The fire went to an 8th alarm which brought units in from Napa and Yolo counties. Conditions warranted taking down one row of houses located adjacent to Hackett Street to keep the school safe and the fire away from 300 uninvolved abandoned housing units. At 2330 hours the Unified Commanders surveyed all affected areas as we were receiving many reports of falling telephone poles, trees and branches, and other deteriorating conditions. There were now 78 firefighting apparatus on the base and 225 firefighters with a secure cordon (trucks almost bumper to bumper on some streets), a fire break of one line of homes, and active firefighting in four of the six divisions, as well as exposure protection at the Chapel, Youth Center, Child Development Center, and elementary school. There were also units off base as well as ones in occupied housing. At 0015 we could no longer keep the firefighters safe so we moved back to the cordon after briefing leadership. We released the last off-base assets around 0300. Travis firefighters kept cordon until daylight when fresh firefighters reported to duty. Later that day 16 firefighters from the 349th Reserve Wing reported to duty as

well as engines and crews from Tracy/Sharpe DLA and Concord Naval Weapons and the two Civil Engineer water tenders. The fire was officially declared extinguished on Tuesday morning. Successes were many: A clear demonstration of the rock solid Mutual Aid partnership we enjoy with the off-base community, the great 349th firefighters who came in for a week to help with the firefighting and backfilling tired firefighters, and our local DOD fire departments who we train with constantly. Travis Air Force Base came together as they always do and greatly aided the efforts to extinguish the fire and get the base back to normal functions. There were only two minor injuries to firefighters, which is exceptional in a fire of this magnitude. The fire was kept from several hundred more occupied homes. Over \$100M of base infrastructure was protected, and the taxpayers were saved \$1.5M in demolition costs. The number of abandoned units lost was 176. Difficulties were the fire was predominately air driven with embers the size of basketballs. The drought conditions made for ready combustion when embers landed on roofs. The fence around the area had to be cut, and gas driven fires created problems. Eucalyptus trees were prevalent throughout the housing area and are notorious for being difficult to extinguish. Many off-base firefighters stated how much it felt like the Oakland Hills fire. Lessons learned were to have more gates installed if they fence off abandoned housing. Stress the importance to maintain the water system in these areas. Keep breaches in houses to a minimum and board up broken windows as they occur. Make sure roads are marked with street signs. Base leadership and Chief Don Warner at Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency (AFCESA) were superb to work with. The base held a luncheon to

honor our Mutual Aid and DOD partners and to demonstrate the esteem we hold them in. I have sometimes felt I had seen about everything in the fire world and then an event happens to demonstrate otherwise. (John Speakman Fire Chief Travis Air Force Base CA [John Speakman@travis.af.mil](mailto:JohnSpeakman@travis.af.mil))

Editor's Note: Chief Speakman and the Travis Fire and Emergency Services Team had a mighty bad situation to cope with. Through their efforts alongside their mutual aid partners the loss of a large amount of valuable Air Force resources was prevented. The result of these efforts is a testament to well thought-out pre-fire planning, realistic joint training exercises, and quality fire ground leadership. While I was Fire Chief at Yokota Air Base Japan John Speakman was an integral part of our fire and emergency services team. I am certainly proud to see how John has progressed in his fire service career. All involved in this horrendous fire should be commended. Great job, John! Please pass kudos to all involved especially the Travis Firefighters. (Hoyd "Sandy" Sanders CMSgt (Ret'd) Sandy6T5@comcast.net)

Editor's Corner: It has now been a year since I became Editor of the QNN. I sincerely thank all of you for your patience and encouraging support. It has been a pleasure to work with you in making the newsletter a source of information and, in some cases, entertainment. I continue to solicit your support for articles and ideas to make the QNN better. (Hoyd "Sandy" Sanders CMSgt (Ret'd) Sandy6T5@comcast.net)

