

Retired Air Force Fire Chiefs' Network
QUARTERLY NETWORK NEWS



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

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

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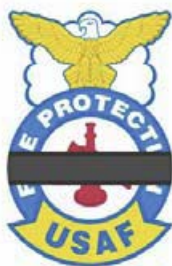
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Founded by: Doug Courchene, CMSgt, USAF, Retired

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EDITOR COMMENTS. Where does all the time go? It seems like I just published the QNN. Well I guess it time to do it again. Don't forget the upcoming reunion in Boston (9-14 September). Now is the time to make your reservations. If you have been "just thinking about it," now is the time to do it. Don't forget to contact Chief Wolbert when you do. The cut-off date for hotel registration is 9 August 2014 so "git er done." The phone number for the hotel is 508-588-6300. You may also go online at www.holidayinnexpress.com/brocktonma, click on ANG/USAF Retired Fire Chiefs.

For those of you who did not get the word, Chief Wolbert broke his leg and is in the healing stages. He said that he would be in top form for Boston.



TAPS

NO REPORTED DEATHS THIS QUARTER.

I have been waiting a long time to be able to write this.

**ELMENDORF AIR FORCE BASE,
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA**

Part of AAC slogan "Top Cover for America" included ingredients for fire protection. At first, the department operated three fire stations, then reduced to two stations. Elmendorf (being an early base to have four P-2s) supported transient large frame aircraft; i.e., C-5, C-141, C-135 and based F-102, F-106 interceptors. A ski-equipped C-130 transported fuel to remote radar stations and rescue helicopter hubs. Two to four Aero Medical C-141s, each carrying 38-45 Vietnam litter and ambulatory patients passed through early mornings. P-2 crash truck crews observed quick turnaround and abnormal refueling because of litter patients on board. By 1969, 25,000 C-141 accident-free flights had been flown.

For the first time, a military deputy fire chief position was approved. SMSgt Rabb came from Chanute Fire School. The department had strong military NCOs to help manage department operations. Three in particular and most qualified were SSgt Jim Moran, well decorated Vietnam veteran, SSgt Ogletree, and SSgt Tremblay. Jim advanced quickly in rank and positions, retired as a CMSgt and later became the Elmendorf civilian fire chief. Sergeants Ogletree and Tremblay had similar success in the profession.

During three years, 350 projects were completed to enhance the fire department and facilities. To mention a few: installed deluge nozzles on three 750-A pampers; replaced F-6 500 gpm pump with 1,000 gpm pump and larger mounted deck gun; renovated station alarm room; upgraded training area; and developed formal mutual aid agreements with the City of Anchorage, International Airport, local borough, and Bureau of Land Management.

Four years after the 1964 Anchorage earthquake, damaged base facilities still needed repairs including sprinkler systems, standpipes, fire hydrants, and water mains.

Despite extreme winters, the crash truck in-commission rate was incredible. The department mechanic, considered one of the best, repaired and maintained the large fleet. His only request: a Texas bottle of whiskey at Christmas. When a fire truck needed repairs, firefighters helped repair it.



Elmendorf had a severe fire loss record reaching 35 reportable fires annually, among the worst in the Air Force. Pressure mounted for sure; everyone felt the heat. The answer was fire prevention education that motivated people. With Chief Dick Waller's expertise, HQ Alaskan Air Command, the Wing, the base, and the fire chief drew up a plan. It was not a fire department plan, but a base program for everyone to include civilians, military, housewives, and baby sitters to be educated at the base theater with a 30 minute on-stage theater presentation by Colonel Johnson (base commander), base legal, police chief, and the fire chief. At the time, family housing had fire extinguishers. Housewives received special hands-on training by Chief Inspector Alphonso on kitchen grease fires at fire station 2. One year later, the base fire loss was reduced by 84% with only three minor incidents. People marveled over the success of the education program. Command support based on action not words made the difference. Elmendorf set the standard for the Alaskan Air Command.

I know of no other base or command with such a large scale and mandatory fire prevention education program.

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How I Became a Fire Officer

Like many of you, at age eighteen I enlisted in the Air Force. I put my life in their hands and they took good care of me. During basic training at Lackland AFB, TX, I, like thousands before me, was marched to “the Green Monster,” a large green building where a personnel specialist was to assist you in selecting a career field to enter. I say that with tongue in cheek. The first dozen guys that entered were told they were going to be air policemen. That was all the tall guys in my flight. The next ten were going to be cooks. This was all the short fat guys. The next five were going to be bus drivers, and they all wore glasses. You know what, I think that I would have made an excellent bus driver; but I was not directed to join any of those groups. My mind wandered for a few seconds, and I envisioned myself as being a waist gunner on a B-36. I kept trying to figure out how the selection system worked. All the highly technical jobs went to the guys that had blue eyes. Well my eyes were brown, I was five feet and eight inches tall, weighed 133 pounds, and my waist measured 28 inches. All of a sudden I realized that everyone in my flight had a job except me. I went up to the desk, snapped to attention and told the SSgt that I wanted a job too. He asked me where I was from and I replied Virginia and I wanted to shoot down airplanes. I don’t know which part he didn’t understand but promptly said; “Perfect, you are going to be a fireman.” I assumed that “fireman” was the technical term for aircraft gunners and almost wet my pants in excitement.

A couple of weeks later I was directed to pack my duffle bag and report to the orderly room. I had been selected to attend technical school at Lowry AFB, Colorado. I was taken downtown San Antonio and put on a train headed for Denver. The train was full of troops with blue

eyes. I wondered if someone in the orderly room had made a mistake. I looked in a mirror and my eyes were still brown. I arrived at Lowry three days later and was directed to a beautiful WW II barracks just like the one I was in at Lackland. I guess they wanted me to feel comfortable because I’m from a small town in Virginia. I was directed to the Orderly Room to find out what I would be doing while I waited for my technical school training to begin. I thought I was receiving VIP treatment when the Airman with one whole stripe told me I would be starting work that same evening as a “fireman.” At 2200 hours, I reported to the Orderly Room again and a SSgt handed me a big shovel and told me I was going to be shoveling coal all night in the furnace rooms throughout the Squadron area. I assumed that this was some form of physical fitness training since the machine guns in the movies appeared to be pretty heavy. I did so well that night that the SSgt told me that I would have honor of shoveling coal ever night for the next thirty days. I of course wrote home to my mom and told her how special the Air Force was treating me. Well, the weather got warm and eventually the SSgt told me I had to start school. The next morning around o-dark-thirty we had breakfast at the Chow Hall. I recognized one of the cooks from my basic training flight. I boarded a blue bus operated by one of the guys I attended basic training with. Most of the troops on the bus were complaining about how early it was. I didn’t mind since I had been up every night for the past thirty days. About halfway to the school house we were stopped by an air policeman that I had been in basic training with. The bus driver got a ticket for failing to yield to a flight of Airmen marching to the Armed Forces Institute for the Development of Nuclear Weapons Technology. Every one of those guys had blue eyes. Go figure. Upon arrival at the school

house we were greeted by SSgt Bruce B. Bobbit. He looked very sharp with his crew cut hair and smirk on his face. His shoulders were about four feet across, and he could really yell loud. I thought that would come in handy later on the B-36 with its ten engines at full throttle. I would be remiss if I didn't mention that SSgt Bobbit was married to a beautiful German girl with long blonde hair. She came by the school house each afternoon in a red 1959 Pontiac convertible to pick up her husband. Boy-o Boy, I couldn't wait to be a SSgt.

I will address my first duty assignment in the next edition of the QNN.

CMSgt (Ret'd) Richard A. Duncan
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ROYAL AIR FORCE STATION STURGATE, ENGLAND, 1952



Pictured 530-A pumper showing standard British instantaneous coupling at the front-mounted pump, along with coupling, hose connected to British standpipe (in America called fire hydrant).

Prewar standpipe had "V" thread; post-war "round" thread. In short, a quick way to make hose and pump connections. Our pumpers were modified using British standard and an Air Force suggestion was submitted and adopted.

The suggester was awarded \$25.00. Americans learned from the British. England had National Standard; we didn't and still don't. Fire apparatus from Lincoln could fight fire in Sheffield as they did in WWII when Germany bombarded steel mills. Britain had 999 long before we had 911. We had fire departments. The Brits had fire brigades. In all we had much in common.

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PUBLISHING AND MAILING FUND



The QNN is privately funded by members' contributions. All donations are strictly voluntary as no membership fees are charged. We started off last quarter with a total of \$1,248.23. The cost of printing and postage for the last QNN was \$54.00, leaving a total of \$1,194.23. During the past quarter a total of \$130.00 was donated by Chiefs Ted Taipalus, Glenn Cloud, and Dale Curtis for a new total of \$1,324.23. I will keep the total posted in each edition so you know where we are on fiscal issues.

PEDRO'S CORNER

**LEN SHULTS, SMSgt, USAF Ret'd,
Firefighter**

Here's hoping you had a great fourth of July!!! As a former firefighter I recall those hot days in South Carolina and Alabama when we sat in a

crash truck on the flightline and when we wore protective gear in a pit fire, even in the evenings. Flying around in the Huskie was cooler with the door open.

Everything is ready for our Pedro Rescue Helicopter Reunion in Colorado Springs, September 17-20. We invite you to attend. We will be dedicating a Monument at the Air Force Academy on Friday, September 19. Contact me if you are interested. 334-273-9804 or (sugardaddyfor1@gmail.com)

We have not made plans for the 2016 reunion yet. We will do that at the meeting in September.

Recently the Air Museum at Robins AFB, Georgia refitted their HH43, painting it with a SEA paint job. When it was finished they put the number 81845 on it. I was really interested in this because it was one of the Huskies I flew on at Maxwell, 1962-64. It went to SEA in 1964 and was left there when the unit returned in 1965. It served until 1968, then crashed on a mission losing all five crew members. I flew many missions on that aircraft.

On Facebook I found a person who has refitted an FSK complete with trailer. I messaged him and told him the Robins and Wright Patterson museums would be interested in it.

Also, another person made a small model of the FSK and has it on a trailer sitting in front of his model of the HH43 he put together. There are several Testers HH43 model kits on E-Bay, asking \$15 up. I am finishing mine to place at the Enlisted Heritage Museum at Gunter.

There is a Facebook page for the Pedro Rescue Helicopter. I try to keep items on this page that may be of interest to all who flew on one.

Another page of interest is the 'Air Force Firefighters/Fire Dogs.' This group has grown

since the first of the year. They are having a reunion 15-17 May 2015 at the Hope Hotel, Dayton, Ohio. This is open to all USAF firefighters, active/reserve/retired/DOD-GS and ANG. If you are interested let me know, I will direct you to the site.

Have a great summer. Keep your hose dry.

Len Shults

YOUR WORD

Charlie, I know it's a pain to mail the newsletter, and I appreciate the effort. Ted Taipalus, 124 County Rd 1556, Alba TX 75410.

Thanks for the kind words and the donation Ted. Charlie

Mr. Richardson, First let me express my thanks for sending me the quarterly network newsletter. I find it to be quite interesting and informative to help me keep up with former firefighter friends, etc.

One item of concern, however, is I seem to be receiving two copies of the letter. I want to let you know this as I realize postage is expensive these days. I am enclosing a check to help out with postage expenses. Dale Curtis, 1190 Newbury Land West, Mobile, AL 36695.

Thanks Dale, I will correct the problem, and thanks for the donation. Charlie

Dear Mr. Richardson, I have enjoyed reading news of our firefighters for a long while and I appreciated the work that went into writing and making it. Now, I have grown so old I do not know any of these wonderful guys. Please, do not send anymore letters. Thank you and all the firemen. I was surely proud of my personal fireman. Dorthy Butler, 671 Sagewood Parkway, Sequin, TX 78155.

OLD DAWG-OLD TRICK. I recently read an AF Pinger's FB post hinting that the young firedawgs don't give the old firedawgs enough credit. Please indulge me as I give one old firedawg's take on this. I place notoriety, visibility, exposure, and legacy in the want, not needed category. These are noteworthy traits, but are a view of you mostly through the eyes of others. Sadly, like our memories, these are short-lived and fade with time. To me, the more rewarding and lasting attributes include on- and off-the-job trust, integrity, and respect. These add the dimension of looking inward. They are long lasting and in most cases will be with you through the proverbial last alarm. So, can you measure these without bias? Over the years I used a simple but effective method to conduct a personal self-evaluation. To begin each morning I look in a mirror when preparing for the day. The young guy I once saw in the reflection is

gone and has been replaced by this gray-haired, aging gentleman . . . but we continue to perform the ritual as we have since day one. If the guy looking back at me nods his approval, I know I'm good to go. Fortunately in this very rewarding life, the guy looking in and the image gazing back have been satisfied with each other. No doubt I am blessed. If you wish to retain this suggest you use file 13, under the "For What It's Worth" column. Thanks for hearing me out. Ben

Ben Partin, bpartin@cox.net

Returned QNNs from last's mailing. Please let me know if you have any address information.

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