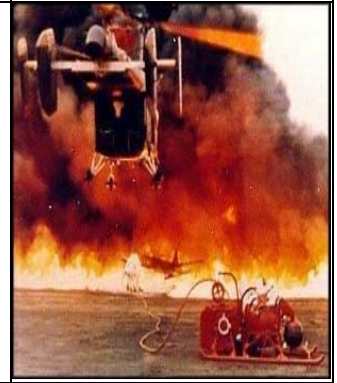


Retired Air Force Fire Chiefs' Network
QUARTERLY NETWORK NEWS



*Legendary Retirees
Who Reminisce About the Past
But Focus on the Future*
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Volume 3 2012

Founded by: Doug Courchene, CMSgt, USAF, Retired

July-September 2012

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR! Hard to believe that it's that time of year again but it's almost here. Hopefully, you will be able to join us in Panama City FL in late December. There is more about this gathering in an article by Richard Duncan. He has put a lot of thought and work into making this happen. Please read the article for all the latest information.

In the last QNN I included a "For What It's Worth Department." I'm not much on Facebook, but there are a few sites for the Fire Guys to follow and a lot of you have. I will continue to look for interesting sites to pass on. If you know of any sites that may be of interest to others please pass them on.

Richard Duncan and Ray Porter have volunteered to help with the QNN and I have been in contact with them and looking forward to their articles. There is always room for more to join in so if you have anything of interest please forward them to any of us for publication. (Charlie Richardson clardb@att.net)

It has been an interesting three months since I took over the QNN, I have heard

from lots of people and they all have interesting things to add. One thing that stands out is the need for a directory of Retired USAF Fire Chiefs. There are all types of lists available for the QNN to use but not one that is consolidated. I will try to get something to start with at the Fellowship Meeting so bring your ideas.

TAPS



Joseph A. Cherniga

12 June 1927-8 September 2012

Former Air Force Fire Chief (SMSgt) Joe Cherniga passed away on 8 September. He was a long-time resident of Fort Walton Beach FL and owner of Safety Service Company. Services with full military honors were held on 12 September with burial in Beal Cemetery.

RETIRED AIR FORCE FIRE CHIEFS FELLOWSHIP MEETING

The 2012 Retired Air Force Fire Chiefs Fellowship Meeting will be held on 27 and 28 December 2012 at the Hampton Inn and Suites, 13505 Panama City Beach, FL, 32407. The hotel is conveniently located 1/2 mile from the beach and 2 miles from the fun of the Pier Park shopping and activity area.

The Hampton Inn & Suites Panama City Beach serves a complimentary hot breakfast, in the lobby from 6AM-10AM daily. For those on the go, they offer complimentary *On the Run* breakfast bags. A complimentary USA Today paper is available in the lobby daily.

The hotel offers beautifully appointed hotel rooms with amenities that include coffeemaker, iron with ironing board, high-speed internet access and a 32 inch flat panel LCD television with premium dish network channels. The property has standard rooms and studio suites that come equipped with a refrigerator, microwave and sleeper sofa to make you feel at home during your stay. They also offer jacuzzi suites. Their beautiful private hotel swimming pool is open year round for your enjoyment.

To keep our attendees connected, the hotel will provide complimentary wireless high-speed internet in the meeting rooms, business center, lobby and hotel rooms. A state-of-the-art fitness center, guest laundry, and sweet shop are available daily for your convenience.

Attendees should contact the hotel directly at 850-230-9080 to make reservations. Reservations must be made on or before Monday, November 26, 2012, to guarantee the room rate of \$79 plus taxes for a standard double Queen or standard King size bed. Please note that there is an "early departure fee" of \$10 per night if you do not stay the duration of your reserved stay. The rate of \$79 per night is for the period of 24 December 2012 through 1 January 2013 for those desiring to arrive a few days before or stay a few days after the meeting. You will have to use a credit card to guarantee your room. NOTE: For any reservation made and guaranteed, if the party does not arrive on their scheduled arrival date or cancel according to hotel policy, the credit card will be charged for one night's room and tax for the party named on the reservation.

There will be a \$10 fee from attendees to cover the cost of renting the meeting room. Also I plan on bringing a computer and scanner to capture any photographs or articles, etc., that attendees might want to share with the QNN. I would also ask each for a bio for QNN's "directory." Tom Smith said he is interested in doing something similar. (Richard "Dick" Duncan, r.duncan1949@yahoo.com)

The 1952 O-11 Biederman Crash Truck



Every time I think of the O-11 Crash truck it reminds me of Lowry AFB. I was one of those fortunate enough to have received training in the Fire & Crash Rescue Instructor Course #9517 during November-December 1952. It was there that I was taught and learned the Phillip's "hop" during those cold and I mean cold (-20 degrees Fahrenheit) days of aircraft crash pit fire training.

During one of the many outside training sessions my class was introduced to the creation of another air force "flop", the Biederman O-11 crash truck. Not only was it a gas guzzler, it also failed all expectations in crash firefighting equipment: the crewman exit doors weren't wide enough to evacuate with full bunker clothing and during fire fighting attacks, the cab piping leaked water and hydraulic fluid flowed freely onto crew members. School staff felt the great disappointment when showing off this contraption.

Once I finished my "instructor" training, which qualified me to instruct

crash firefighting at my home base at Nellis AFB, I was ready to tell it the way it was to other firemen.

Years went by and I was retired and found a second career as Fire Chief at Davis-Monthan AFB in 1972. During one of my few days off, while visiting the many sites Tucson had to offer, I wound up at "Old Tucson," the filming site of many western movies. As I walked around the movie sets I happened to see an old buddy back among the piles of tumble weed. It was of all things an O-11 crash truck long abandoned and faded almost beyond recognition. Old Tucson had purchased it years before as fire protection but gave up when all types of mechanical problems occurred.

A few weeks later I happened to visit the Pima Air Museum which at the time was just starting to collect aircraft, missiles, etc. An old two story WWII wooden barracks was there to recall the good old days of military life. Other odds and ends consisted of inert missile shells, numerous military aircraft, etc. I contacted the curator and asked if he would like to have an Air Force crash truck for fire protection. He gladly accepted my offer.

In May 1976 I made contact with Jim Davis. He and I visited Old Tucson. We asked the manager if the fire department at Davis-Monthan could obtain the O-11 crash truck so that the truck could be thoroughly overhauled and donated to the Pima County Air Museum. He agreed to the offer and I

made arrangements to tow the truck to the base.

Once I explained my plan to the Base Commander, permission was granted to restore the truck in our off-duty time. I was able to obtain funds from the local branch of the Air Force Association and off we went with the hard work of sanding, painting, replacing gaskets, fittings, etc. After perhaps 450 hours of strenuous work, the truck was finally ready for a test run.

Two of my driver-operators took turns driving the truck four and one-half miles to the museum. We soon realized the truck was still a gas guzzler as four extra five-gallon jerry containers had to be used to refuel the truck just outside the museum property. Once on the property, the keys were presented to the museum curator. The proud and shiny 0-11 was then placed on display as an addition to their collection.

The 0-11 Crash Truck is still proudly representing Air Force Fire Protection. It can be viewed on the internet at "Pima County Air Museum" through Google. Chief Pete Semanick psemanic@swcp.com

Editor's Note: Thank you Pete for your story. I remember the vehicle at the museum from my time when I was stationed at Davis-Monthan AFB. You were the Chief at the time and quite proud of the department for all their hard work.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

Where is George F. Hall, CMSgt, USAF (Ret)?

A few QNN editions ago, I suggested to



Hoyd Sanders that the readership be solicited for updates on where folks were located

today, what they have been up to since retiring, and just a general recap of items of interest. Thus, when Charlie volunteered to assume the role of principal editor, I was asked to step to the plate. So, as the guinea pig out of the chute—here goes.

I find it hard to believe that 20 years have elapsed since I retired from the active Air Force roles (1966-1992). Immediately after retirement, I was fortunate to obtain a temporary contract position at the Air Force Research Laboratory that was converted to Civil Service. I found the work in the lab to be interesting, challenging, and, more importantly, rewarding for the front-line firefighting force, by putting new and test verified technology into their hands. Coordinating with Wade Grimm at the SPO at Eglin and Joe Fisher at TAC made equipment fielding seamless.

After 5+ years of R&D I obtained a permanent GS position on the AFCEA staff and took on the responsibilities of the operations section (policy; NATO Standardization; NFPA standards development; vehicle design,

procurement, inspections, and testing; and more committees, acronyms, and power point slides than I can remember, etc..) Let me emphatically state that working on the Air Staff in the crystal palace for 8+ years was the most rewarding experience I have ever had. If you haven't been there--throw no rocks my friends. It was the most dedicated group of professionals I've ever worked with. Check your ego at the door--what you did at AFCESA affected every firefighter in the Air Force. After serving 4 general officers, commanders, directors, and 3 Chiefs of Fire Protection--and commuting on weekends for 14 years--it was time to move on and enjoy my senior years with my wife of 44 years. I entered the Federal Witness Protection Program in November 2006 for a year and was released early for good behavior.

I wasn't a GS retiree for a week when folks in the military services and private business started calling for info. DUH! So, I hung out a shingle and provided consulting services for another 5 years. The wife and I had planned for the future and are secure. We are now reaping the benefits of our sacrifices. I have found that there are several Facebook sites that have brought a lot of us "old timers" back together. I'm finding folks I haven't thought of in years and am now enjoying reminiscing and bantering current and past issues. Likewise, email exchanges keep us in touch with friends from the past.

Sadly so many of our peers have passed, and so few are still around. Personally, I worked for and with so many great people: Lenny Blau, Bill Burke, Willie Bell, Bobby Barrow, Guy

Wills, Bill Wilson, Ralph Shelton, Bobby Flannigan, MG Norma Brown, CWO Lou Garland, Lt Col Lou Gott, Ralph McHenry, Tony Bamer, Bill Moore, Hugh Pike, Ben Partin, Jim Hotell, Tom Smith, Jim Podolski, Joe Walker, and Dick Vickers. Having been on the PACAF, TAC, USAFE, and Fire Academy staffs, I served with and met so many that the list would be too extensive to post. There were some really great people who excelled. We have followed in their footsteps, embraced their mentorship, and led during our respective watches. The current generation of MAJCOM fire chiefs and base level future leaders are doing exactly the same. I laud their efforts for continuing the proud traditions road mapped out before us. I am often asked if I miss the service (military or civilian). You're damn right! Waking early in the morning, name tag and ribbons on the blue shirt, going in at least an hour early, preparing for the day or deciding what tie to wear were easy tasks. The camaraderie of my fellow workers, daily briefings, making announcements at roll call, troop promotions and awards, commanders shaking hands and patting the troops on the back for a job well done--damn right I miss it. While working a staff job, one does not see that often; but one does get satisfaction knowing that what you did put trucks and equipment in the field that were reliable--and if it broke, you did all you could to get it fixed PRONTO! My only regret is that dang P-23 that Mary Zampa still cusses about. Looking back--and showing my age: The Air Force was a Great Way of Life!

Sharon and I, in our Military/Civil Service/Medicare/Tri-Care for Life, and Social Security retirement twilight moments, are in good health and are enjoying leisure time with our sons, daughter-in-laws, two grand-daughters, local friends/neighbors and our 12-yr-old Sheltie. Annual Caribbean cruises with friends are fantastic, lobster snorkeling in the Florida Keys are spectacular, visiting friends near and far is exciting, and periodically donating to a local casino helps the economy. Watching Dr Phil and Judge Judy provides perspective.

The Ft Walton Beach area is a close-knit 100% military-oriented special operations community—home of Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field. The weather is great, taxes are low, and people are friendly. It has been a great place to live and permanently retire for the past 20 years. Should you pass through, contact us--like Motel 6, we'll leave a light on for ya!

Best to you all: George F. Hall, CMSgt, USAF (Ret): ifac@cox.net

Editor's note. Thank you George, now who will volunteer to be the next Where are they? Send your information to me, and I will get it in the next QNN. ANYONE? Charlie Richardson clardb@att.net

**FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH
DEPARTMENT
FROM AROUND THE NET**

As I said earlier I'm not a big fan of Facebook, but there seems to be a lot of interest from some of you on Retired

Air Force Fire Officers and Air Force Fire Dogs pages. Check out togetherweserved.com which also has a USAF Fire Fighters page.

Other organizations you may be interested in:

National Association for Uniform Services

5535 Hempstead Way
Springfield, VA 22151-4094
www.NAUS.org

Veterans of Foreign Wars

406 W. 34th St,
Kansas City, MO 64111
www.vfw.org

Air Force Association

1501 Lee Highway
Arlington, VA 22209-1198
www.afa.org

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 \$1320.64. The cost of printing and postage for the last QNN was \$75.01. Leaving a total of \$1245.63. During the past quarter a total of \$40.00 was donated by Chief Doug Courchene & myself, for a new total of \$1285.63. I

will keep the total posted in each edition so you know where we are on fiscal issues.

YOUR WORD

REQUESTING MILITARY RECORDS

Veterans who retired before 1 October 2004 must visit the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) website (<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>) for record request instructions. People requesting the record of a deceased relative who retired before 1 October 2004 may now use the NPRC website to order a copy of the military records. Regardless of the request procedures used, processing can take time. Do not send a follow-up request before 90 days have elapsed as it may cause further delays. Veterans who retired after 1 October 2004 can

access certain records online by registering for a premium account on <http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/>. Click the register button at the top of the home page and follow the instructions provided to obtain a premium account. The website may not be inclusive for all retirees. (Submitted By Chief Jeffrey Davis)

I wish to convey a very strange event. Fate has a way of reaching us all. In late 60s or early 70s , the Military Fire Chief at Sondrestrom AB in Greenland was returning from an R&R home visit. The C-141 that he was a passenger on crashed on landing, and he perished at his own base.

Thank you Eugene Courtemanche for the above information.