



# RETIRED AIR FORCE FIRE CHIEFS'



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
APR-JUN 2001

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Just finished reading the quarterly and always great newsletter. Doug, you have really held things together for all of us and I know that words cannot express how grateful we all are.

Received a letter from our good friend "Winnie," Chief Ron Winningham. His wife Dimple is doing much better. Betty and I pray for Dimple daily for we all know that prayer is the most powerful on this earth. I pray for your good health Doug, and cherish our close friendship.

If you ever head to Memphis, our home is your home. You and Evelyn don't need an invitation. You are family. May our precious Lord and Savior continue to watch over you and Evelyn. **Chief Charles Peters, 5174 Scrivener Drive, Memphis, TN 38134 (901) 874-5280** [Cpeters@navsuppact-midsouth.navy.mil](mailto:Cpeters@navsuppact-midsouth.navy.mil) *(Thanks for the Christmas Card, kind words, photo of you and Betty taken in Dallas 2000 (so dignified in chief's uniform), and contribution to the newsletter. Over the holiday season, Evelyn and I have received countless Christmas Cards. She placed them on doorway between the kitchen and den for every one to see. Editor)*

CONTRIBUTORS: Chief Roger Miller, Chief Charles Peters, Chief Dan Nevins, Chief Jim Deal.

I apologize for the small print in the last newsletter, Jan-Mar 2001. I used 10 instead of the usual 12 type. I could not read my own newsletter. This is 12 type and if it's not large enough, I'll increase it to 14, 16, whatever, or even make an appointment with optometrist. Editor

I got the Jan-Mar 2001 newsletter and always happy to hear fresh news about the "old gang." After the holidays, I'll send stories of the "gang." Del Rio, Texas is just great, but having to leave for Phoenix to see my first two-month-old grand baby. I can't wait to see and hold her. **Chief Frank Denny, 120 Lodgepole, Del Rio, TX 78840, [frankdenny@wconline.net](mailto:frankdenny@wconline.net)** *(I suppose grandpa qualifies as a member of the old gang. Looking for "gang" stories not lies for publication. Editor)*

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One year ago, Barbara and I started a new life at Olive Grove Retirement Resort. After our normal way of living for 49 years, it was hard. We live with 200 aged people. There

are a few married couples. Residents range from their 70s and 80s and a few in their 90s. One old soldier is 101. He served in WWI, in the battle of the Argonne.

After one year, one can believe in the saying, "Every day is Sunday." There are no meals to prepare, no grocery shopping, no grass cutting, no lawn sprinklers to fix, no swimming pool to care for. One thing we do daily, make our beds.

Barbara fell and fractured her hip before moving to "resort." She has since acquired peripheral neuropath causing her feet to feel very cold. There is no cure for it. I've had two accidents...the first, March 2000, falling down two levels of stairs smashing both elbows. The second time, I fell over backward in a chair; my head struck a steel bookcase, and knocked myself out. Now, having had three brain concussions in the fire service, I qualify as a "Hard Headed Dutchman."

Our son Albert visited us for a week December 2000. Our daughter Barbara tries to visit three times a week. **Chief W & E Barbara Vreeland, 7858 California Avenue, Apt 207M, Riverside, CA 92504-2541 (909) 688-5205** (Bob it was great to hear from you at Christmas time. Bob, for October 2000, I noticed you being Resident of the Month at Olive Grove Retirement Resort. The local Gazette carried the story and photo. Good write up and handsome photo. Editor.)

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This is from Big John T. Anderson. Guess you thought I had dropped off the earth. Well, I haven't, but I do have the big "C" and maybe I can beat it, as you know I never did do things like any one else. I do enjoy reading the newsletters and thanks for writing them. If it is all the same to you, I prefer getting the newsletter regular mail. **Chief John T. Anderson, 4633 Western Avenue, Davenport, IA 52806 KlayKidz@aol.com** (Big John, I wish you the best. Our days together at March Air Force Base, California are well remembered, 1958-1960. We accomplished a great deal in two years, seemed we had great military supervisors willing to lead. We united and raised the department from unsatisfactory rating by the SAC IG, to excellent in six months. Thanks for being a heavyweight in doing more than your share. I include others like TSgt Mullins, TSgt McCutchen, SSgt Ryan, SSgt Roa, SSgt Patrick Jolicoeur, TSgt Neer, SSgt Rodney Hughes (his famous words, Rodney "B" from across the sea) whatever that meant. Assistant Chief Duffy was an ultra lightweight, Tucker and Hutchinson middleweights, Chief Charlie Wellwood, once a heavyweight, but weakened by less then competent BCEs who hurt him. By the way, one BCE, who never visited his fire department, left, while I was at March. Also, through special arrangement with base personnel, Master Sergeant Pichanti (sp) PCS'd overseas. He was known to create instead of solving problems. When I transferred from Dyess to March, I had unofficial marching orders -- report weekly to Bert Kwist and SMSgt Bob Dunn at Hq 15AF. I gave them progress reports. No one knew except for me telling the story now. Unfortunately, Bert Kwist and Bob Dunn are no longer with us to read these lines. They would chuckle and approve. I felt very confident going and doing at March. I couldn't be fired by anyone on base! I wanted to share this account to make you smile. Take Care Big Man -- Your friend, not your supervisor. I'm proud of you. You did well as expected in the profession reaching the top rung...Fire Chief Doug)

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**ATTENTION! Chief Gus Hunter, Associate Editor will publish the Jul-Sep 2001 Newsletters. Readers, please send material directly to him for publication. 7510 Highland, Ralston, NE 68127-3909 Tel (402)331-4278 email: [dandahunter@aol.com](mailto:dandahunter@aol.com)**

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Dan has gained back about 72% of his strength after his radiation treatments in March and April 2000. He keeps busy in his workshop. Enclosed is postage money for the newsletter. We do enjoy it so much and makes us feel like we keep in touch that way. **Mary Nevins, 12450 Country Club Drive, Rolla, MO 65401** (*I had no idea Dan had been through radiation treatments for two months. Our friendship goes back to Ft Worth Army Airfield and together again at Dow Air Force, Bangor, Maine, better known as the "cold country". The military housing had coal-burning stoves with coal pile outside. Two of three wooden fire stations, relics of WWII, had pot-bellied stoves. Today that kind of housing and fire station would be outright substandard and unlivable. We had to transfer overseas to improve our living conditions. Best wishes Dan and a speedy recovery. Love, Doug & Evelyn*)

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My right leg has been amputated. I had been telling my doctor for months of poor blood circulation in my leg. I failed to convince him in time. It took four operations to stabilize the leg just below the knee. **Chief Frank Livingston, 224 Pinedo Drive, Titusville, FL 32780** [FrankLivingston@TopAssistant.com](mailto:FrankLivingston@TopAssistant.com) Tel (321) 264-3472 (*Frank, you have experienced an unfortunate happening in your life, but you have faced it with a positive attitude. Give it time to heal. I, and all retired fire chiefs wish you well in recovery-Editor*).

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Doug, sorry I haven't gotten back with you sooner. I'm busy with promotions. I have not had a lot of luck finding anyone that can give me any information, or anyone willing to take on this project of AFSC/AFMC Fire History. After the Holidays, maybe things will lighten up; and I can spend some time in the command history office. I've tried several different Ray Smiths (early pioneer in crash truck design) with no luck. **Chief Jim McKay, Chief Fire Protection, 88CEG/CEF, 5160 Pearson Road, WPAFB, OH 45433.** [Jimmy.Mckay@wpafb.af.mil](mailto:Jimmy.Mckay@wpafb.af.mil) (*Jim, I thank you deeply for being one of a few at headquarters having helped research history of fire protection. The earlier material you sent including photos was most interesting. and useful. If we could only contact Ray Smith, research on earliest crash trucks would end at one sitting. Editor*)

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Yes, I do have an e-mail address: [rosened@thegrid.net](mailto:rosened@thegrid.net) with Internet, word processor and the other marvels of modern technology. Other devices like a plastic heart valve, pacemaker, plastic hip, penile implant and innovations of greatness of the modern age keep me going. All these sure help, but I'm waiting on some pill making aged bones move like a well-oiled machine.

At 80, it seems like I'm slowing down. This year I finished a two-year history book project for a 10,000 member church, the largest in San Diego County. I also finished a family history book titled: "Shutes and off-Shutes" All family members received a copy. For 2001, I'm starting on a history book for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the little church I belong to in Yreka.

Altogether, I've written four family books of the lives of my forefathers. This year I will start on what is to be my last one. "My Life, Hers, and Ours – It Was Worth It All." I plan to leave this one for my children, grand, great, and great-great grandchildren.

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Our professor at the college related an article of an 80 + year old lady being encouraged to write the memoirs of her life. She responded, "Who would want to read about my life?" People kept after her. Finally, she sat down at the kitchen table with a pencil and notebook and started writing her memoirs. The local newspaper heard about it and placed some of her articles in the newspaper. The editor became so enthusiastic that he sent some of the work to a friend at CBS. CBS offered her a million dollars for the rights to her writing. AARP featured one of her articles and she's still writing. Doug, keep that in mind and when you make your first million, let me know.

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We may crank up our motor home, Rosie's Roost, one more time, head across country to Arlington, Texas and visit Dick & Marie Waller, Rosie's family in Indiana and unsure just where else. If we get as far as North Carolina, we'll call first and stop by.

Many thanks for keeping the Quarterly Newsletter going. It lets me know that there are a few of my contemporaries out there that are still going strong. Thanks again to you, Gus and Bob Vreeland for keeping the memories alive

If nothing else old friends will know there is roadside rest on California I-5, where they can stop and get a good night's rest. Seems like everyone went south to retire.

By the way, I got word from someone ( I don't remember who) that Ed Chedd passed away in Florida a number of years ago. I have been so busy since retirement 25 years ago that I have lost touch with almost everyone from my fire service years.

Anyway, I have squeezed more retirement pay out of the government than the actuary tables allowed according to statistics on fire fighters. **Chief Ed Sams, 909 South Street, Yreka, CA 96097 e-mail [rosened@thegrid.net](mailto:rosened@thegrid.net)** *(It's been 33 years since our days in Anchorage, Alaska. You at Headquarters AAC, with Seth Moore, Ed Chedd, Dick Waller, I as Fire Chief at Elmendorf. When Chief Spencer Allen retired at Elmendorf, I became chief. Chief Allen and his wife Edith moved to Santa Barbara, California, then to 620-Q Avenida Sevilla Laguna Woods, CA, 92653. Chief Allen died January 19, 1994. Edith lives at that address today and we communicate).* Doug.

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It has been a long time since we've been together in England. First of all, I retired in 1999 at the age of 71 with 52 years of Federal Fire Service. I believe that I had been the oldest Fire Chief in any of the military services.

My wife, Alicia, passed away from cancer February 1, 1998 and I sure miss her. We had a wonderful life together. Just before her death, she completed college at Eastern Washington University after a delay of thirty years, which was necessitated by the birth of our children, Tracey and Eric.

A year before my retirement, I had suffered a stroke and have partially recovered. With a partial leg problem and minor speech impairment. I'm presently living with my daughter in Lynnwood, Washington and have a satisfying life in every respect. I have a room at the house with my own bathroom and living facilities.

I hope everything is fine with you and it was so great to hear from you. Our times together in the Air Force all over the world were times that I'll never forget. **Chief Joe Haider, Jr. U. S. Navy retired. Email [Fordman01@msn.com](mailto:Fordman01@msn.com)** *(Joe our time together almost a half century ago is well remembered. You, William Rohus, the late Hollis Ford (mandolin), Henson (violin) and his band of musicians made Sturgate on the farm interesting, Our chicken killing Dalmatian that cost us dearly and the three F-84Fs that crashed on the runway at once, all pilots saved, all to this we can say –Atta Boys! We patted ourselves on the back, because no one sought to present medals. Decorations were hard to come by back then. I've not heard from Rohus, although he was chief at Zaragoza, Spain in 1959. You, Sourdough Dick Waller and the late Chief O. A. Kimbrough were legends in fire prevention education that motivated people. You were the best! My friend, I wish you the very best. Doug).*

**Chief Bob Barrow has joined the staff as Associate Editor. Congratulations! There is no pay deferential between us. We all have five trumpets Doug**



**TAPS Major General George “Jud” Ellis former TAC/DE, died of cancer January 15, 2001. He is buried at Riverton, WY. The editor was privileged to work for two of the finest, Ben Partin and “Jud” at Langley in 1980. When the MGM burned in Las Vegas, the editor was conducting a staff visit at Nellis and Indian**

**Springs, November 1980. The editor was asked to contact General Ellis immediately and give an update. The first thing General said, “Doug, I’m going to connect with the four-star so know General Creech will be listening.” The General personally delivered birthday cards to members of his staff. He was a good sport, playing softball at picnics, and volleyball at the gym. He introduced Wang Computers at TAC, and bases followed his lead. Some of you may remember an earlier interview for the Airman’s Magazine. He was a West Pointer all the way. He loved the fire department; he attended and participated at most annual Command Fire Chiefs’ Conferences. When “Jud” made his second star, the Seymour Johnson AFB Fire Department sent him two-star insignias. The department received a thank you note.**

**Retired Senior Master Sergeant Bobby Kurkendhal died at his home, January 13, 2001. Bobby retired at Tyndall in the late 90s, after heart surgery. Bobby led team on fire vehicles and supply while a member of ACRFET. Chief Bob Barrow had the pleasure of working with Bobby at Tyndall, 1985-1992. One tool Bobby demonstrated was a penetrating Buck Roger’s “thing” with a charge.**

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Buy a couple of logs for the fireplace. I enjoyed the get together in Dallas, Texas last August. It was great! All things are about the same here in the West. Keep up the good work on publishing the Quarterly Newsletter. I always look forward to reading it. **Chief Jim Deal, 3795 Knoll Lane #1, Colorado Springs, CO 80917** (*Jim I must acknowledge your financial contributions since the first published newsletter began ten years ago. I sincerely thank you. You are a first class trooper even if you did come off the Dew Line. Doug*).

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We will be off the inter net from 26<sup>th</sup> January 2001, until we are settled in our new home. We'll contact you again after our move is completed, and I have time to get this computer set up again. Our new address: **Bill & Mary Barron, 1001 Royal Lane, Graham, TX 76450-4329** **Tel (940) 549-6433** (*Bill, thanks for letting me know. You will have a short move to Graham, I believe it's next to the Brazos River, about 50 miles northwest of Ft. Worth. I received your new email address ll Feb. [xitmb@wf.net](mailto:xitmb@wf.net) Doug*)

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On January 25, 2001, Chief Bob Vires emailed me concerning Chief Ralph Shelton having a heart attack and hospitalized. After a few days, he returned home for recovery. Later, I emailed Ralph and got an immediate response. He lost 25 pounds and feeling fine. Ralph, your friends wish you well. Doug.

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We have always sent a Christmas card to Francis Ryan (a good buddy of Dink Cessna) who was the Fire Chief at Goose Air Base when SAC was there. Anyway I just got a letter from his wife, Eleanor, who told us that Francis had passed away on 29 Feb 2000. He had suffered a stroke. After he had retired from USAF, he had been some kind of a wheel in the Canadian government. Don't know whether you knew him or not, Doug, but he was a great guy. **Chief Gus Hunter, 7510 Highland, Ralston, NE 68127-3909** [Dandahunter@aol.com](mailto:Dandahunter@aol.com) (*I didn't know him, but had Francis on my mailing list for some*

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*time. In addition to the newsletter, I wrote several letters and never got an answer. Doug*

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Doug, I plan to send you a package to stake my claim that my fire department in Vietnam was the most decorated and challenge anyone to prove otherwise. They must consider the total number of fire fighters assigned. Please send me your Fax number, or I will mail copies of the special orders. **Chief Hampton Cayson, 1021 Otter Road, Trenton, IL 62293** **SquirrelPapadocs.com** (*Hamp, I don't have Fax service, please email or use regular mail. I look forward to publish your Vietnam story. Stories of World War Two and Korean Conflict have been told. More stories of Vietnam need to be told. Doug.*

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Thanks for emailing Frank Denny's address. Doug, to answer your question, I never had the pleasure of meeting Chief Len Martin, the first Plattsburg Air Force Base, Fire Chief, but he's still very well remembered throughout our community. He certainly left a lasting impression. I'm sad to report that he passed away in 1975. He had three children, two sons and a

daughter whom I see occasionally. This past summer we organized the first reunion of all fire fighters who were assigned to Plattsburg AFB, NY – 1956-1995. We had over 90 people to attend, many of whom came from out of town. We had a memorial service for departed fire fighters and of the ten fire chiefs, seven attended, two are departed and one we cannot locate.

Again, thanks for your assistance in locating Frank Denny. I look forward to the quarterly newsletter. **Chief Dave W. Henderson, 109 Prospect Road, Keeseville, NY 12944-2646 [ShDaHender@aol.com](mailto:ShDaHender@aol.com)** (*I'm glad I could be of assistance. You are on the mailing list for the newsletter. Welcome aboard. Editor.*)

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A 100 year old man was asked about life. He replied, "I don't worry about peer pressure."

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Doug, am sending you my e-mail address once again, as had sent it to you when you first came on-line last year. Really enjoying your Quarterly Newsletters. Keep up the good work!  
**Chief Bill R. Beniker, NAVMAR Directory Editor, 2440 Pleasure House Road, Virginia Beach, VA, 23455-1348 email [wrbeniker@home.com](mailto:wrbeniker@home.com)** (*My good Navy friend, I thank you for sending your email address. We have become good friends. Over the years, you have furnished me the U. S. Navy and Marine Corps Fire Protection Fire Service Directory. Names in the directory have included fire chiefs earlier retired from the Air Force such as Chief Joe Haider, Jr. now retired from the Navy. Doug*)

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Here are some of the medals my fire fighters received at Binh Thuy, a VNAF base, staking my claim that we had the most decorated fire department in Vietnam, based on fire fighters assigned. This list doesn't include all of the medals. Recipients of the Bronze Star, May 7, 1967, after the Viet Cong severely damaged the base: **TSgt Jim Norris, SSgt Lawnie Marcoux, SSgt James Patterson, AIC Michael Britsky, AIC William Bradley, Fire Department Mechanic, AIC William Burdine, AIC John Carroll, AIC William Johnson, AIC Jess Mullin, AIC Charles White, my designated grenade jumper until he got this medal and A2C Leon Grimes.**

**Recipients of the Airman's Medal after extinguishing a fire on a mark 24 magnesium flare burning among 250 pound white phosphorus bombs loaded on a bomb trailer, April 5, 1967. TSgt James Norris, SSgt Lawnie Marcoux, AIC Michael Britsky, AIC Jess Mullin, AIC Ray Stacks and AIC Gerald Stonecipher. In separate incidents, AIC Britsky was award another Airman's Medal for extinguishing a fire on six white phosphorus bombs under the wind of a crashed A1E fighter, February 9, 1967. Also, TSgt Milton Puckett received an Airman's Medal for rescuing a pilot from under an O-2 aircraft, December 12, 1967 Chief Hampton Cayson, 1021 Otter Road, Trenton, IL 62293 [SquirrelPapadocs.com](http://SquirrelPapadocs.com) (*Hamp, you sent the material as promised Thank you. . I know two recipients, Jim Norris who I hired and who served in the Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, Fire*)**

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*Department until his retirement -- A first class performer. I became acquainted with Milt Puckett in 1978. I salute them all. Editor).*

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Dyess has changed since 1956. With the B1B bomber-training mission, the base grew. The structural fire station was closed and three stalls were added to the flight line fire station. I retired in 1990, and the chief's position was one of three converted to military. CMS Copeland is chief, but retires March 2001. The department thrived under his leadership. The department lost two supervisory civilian positions – operations & Tech Service. Yes, Dyess lost two weapons loaded B-47s. One ended barely off base beyond the south overrun; the other about three miles by old Camp Barkeley. I presume the one you mentioned earlier was at the overrun. Both of these happened before my arrival in 1962. William L. Burke was the chief, CMS Nivens and

CMS Bill Carey – Nivens left in a week and Carey left a month later. I took Carey's place as Deputy Chief and stayed until 1964, then off to Ramey AFB before Christmas that year. That's where I worked with CMS Ralph Sanborn and Osborn for 2 1/2 years -- the hardest and most rewarding of my military career.

Doug, please send me Ralph Shelton's email address. (*Chief Swift, thank you for the Dyess update. Yes, there was excitement and anxiety October 1958 when that B-47 crashed with weapon on board, one fatality. 15 second intervals between bomber launch isn't much time and no wiggle room for mistakes. Burke was Assistant Chief that day, and I rode with Chief O. A. Kimbrough to the crash site, while Burke stayed on base dealt with aborted aircraft, ATO bottles going everywhere, runway on fire and grass fires between runway and parking ramp. I've written about that incident in the past, but the accident seems as fresh as yesterday. Editor).*

**WRITE ON!**