



556 SMS ASSOCIATION JUNE 2004 NEWSLETTER

Greetings to everyone. Hope everyone is having a great 2004.

This of course is our after reunion newsletter. The top is my first try in making our letterhead more specific to the 556th. Let me know what you think at braleigh@wideopenwest.com. I must admit I owe it all to my wife Edie, the computer expert in our family. She helped me locate the Atlas Missile graphic and scan in the 556 patch.

For all those who were unable to make the reunion, we had another great time in San Antonio. Fred Crytzer did a super job of arranging the activities, as well as handling the few glitches that happened to come up. A special thanks goes to Kent Van Meter and his wife Carol who graciously helped cover some expenses when the Tour Company would not accept a credit card. Can you believe it? Anyway, on to a chronological record of the activities.

The reunion started on Sunday the 18th. I would like to give a recap of what took place but since I arrived on Monday I can't do so. I do know that some did arrive on Sunday and had a good time seeing parts of SA. Also, Col Beck paid a visit to the hospitality room that afternoon.

I arrived on Monday early afternoon. After checking in and settling in my room, I headed to the hospitality room. Low and behold only Fred and his wife were there. Everyone else was out enjoying the day. That is when I heard of the new schedule. Apparently because of the Fiesta time we had our activities re-arranged by our friendly tour company leader. We now had Monday free. We would have our business meeting Tuesday AM, River Walk boat tour and dinner Tuesday evening.

Wednesday we went to Fredericksburg, Texas and toured the Nimitz Historical Museum and the National Museum of the Pacific War, George Bush Gallery, as well as other

interesting places. If you have never been there and are close by some day, try to visit the town. It is a very interesting place and all who went enjoyed it.

The River Walk tour and dinner were a real highlight. The meal at the restaurant was not only good tasting, but was huge in the serving sizes. A few of us walked back along the river and had a great time wisecracking with Smiley Brewer et al.

The Wednesday banquet was the highlight of the week as usual. Everyone showed up, even the late Fred Young, late arriving, not what you are thinking. (Not only that, but we are holding him to his word to attend the next reunion.) We were wondering where he was but were not worried since he was a member of the 556th SMS and was/is a lean mean fighting machine. At least we think he was/is.

The dinner started out with President Murton welcoming everyone and saying a memorial prayer. We then feasted to either chicken or steak. (The chicken eaters got the better of the two meals this time.)

After the dinner the activities started. Dana introduced the new officers:

President: Fred Crytzer
Vice President: Mel Driskill
Secretary/Treasurer: Bruce Raleigh
Historian: David Johnson
Historian Emeritus: Charlie Kaczor

Prior to presenting some awards, Ray Kelsay was recognized for his efforts in obtaining the plaques and on short notice.

Charlie Kaczor was presented with a plaque for all his efforts as historian and for making sure the 556 SMS will be remembered for years to come. He has spent many hours with the AF Museum in Dayton, the Historical Society in Plattsburg and the Octave Chanute Aerospace Museum in Illinois. As part of our honoring Charlie we agreed to pay for his stay in SA. But Charlie, being the great person he is, said thanks but leave the money in the treasury.

Charlie, Many thanks from all of us for all you have done for the memory of the 556 SMS.

Our newest member, David Johnson, was elected Historian. David is a Webmaster and has developed a web site for the 556 SMS Association, www.556SMS.com. This site has many links to other site regarding Atlas Missiles. He asked all members to contact him through the web sites if they have significant bits of history, photos and interesting stories about their experience with the 556 SMS.

Col Beck was also recognized with a plaque. As some may recall we also honored him at the reunion in Dayton in 1990 for his leadership of the Squadron while at Plattsburg. This time it was honoring him for his generous support for the 556 SMS Association through the years. I am sure it encouraged many to attend knowing he would be attending rather than some Airman named Bruce Raleigh. We also honored Col Kretzschmar for his similar support. Since he was unable to attend the reunion we presented the Certificate of Appreciation to him at his residence.

One thing many may not know about Col's Beck and Kretzschmar. Both obviously spent many years in the military serving their country. And during this service were in many organizations. Having said this, both have told me that this is the ONLY reunion they attend. I know I appreciate that as well as all the members. It says something for the 556 as well as the members.

Dan Gornell gave a presentation on his work in Azerbaijan. He works through Rotary International with a dental program as a volunteer. His work is appreciated by all.

All members are encouraged to send your email addresses, spouses name, correct phone numbers and correction to addresses to Bruce Raleigh, 8273 Burning Bush Rd., Grosse Ile, MI 48138, Tel 734-671-5530, email, braleigh@wideopenwest.com

As a result of the business meeting we decided to meet with the Association of Air Force Milliliers [AAFMM] group, probably in Cheyenne, WY in 2006.

I always ask for input on what members have been up to. As always send me the info on what you are or have been doing. Here are a few I have received plus a little on myself.

From Dana Murton

Dana Murton retired from managing a True Value Hardware store several years ago but continues to work there 2 days a week taking care of the incoming merchandise & paperwork data entry. He also manages to keep busy coordinating the maintenance and modification programs for his church.

Dorothy Murton, Dana's wife, is very active on the Board of Directors of a residential foundation for seniors. She also does volunteer work for her church and plays a good game of golf every week.

From Dan Gornell

Dan Gornell "retired, retired" last June and is volunteering his full time efforts on a Rotary International children's dental project in Azerbaijan (a former Soviet satellite country on the Caspian Sea). He rotates his time between Baku, Azerbaijan and Colorado - spending three months in Az, three months in CO, three months in Az, etc.

Barbara, his bride of 41 years, accompanies him overseas and teaches English to Azeri students and orphans. When she is in CO, Barbara is busy visiting second-hand thrift shops buying shoes to take to the Azeri orphans.

From Kent Van Meter

Kent retired from The USAF in 1965 to join American Airlines as a pilot. He married Carol Wilson later that year and spent the next 39 years in marital bliss.

Looking for a reason to be in the mountains of Colorado he became a Volunteer ski instructor for the NSCD, National Sports Center for the Disabled, teaching the disabled in a "sit ski". The "sit ski" is an apparatus that has evolved since 1970 to allow persons unable to stand the thrill of the slopes on the super snow of Colorado. There are three forms of skis, ranging from a toboggan type, where the instructor controls every action of the "ski" with the student securely belted into the ski. The second is known as the "bi-ski" consisting of a "bucket" to strap the student into two shorter, wider skis and "outriggers" (ski poles with mini skis attached) that the student can use in making turns. The third type is the mono-ski, consisting of a "bucket," a single ski, and outriggers. There are variations of all three depending on the disability and the competence of the student.

In the off season he helps the Kiwanis Club of McKinney, TX., building wheelchair ramps for needy families.

Carol has also been a volunteer for the NSCD, working in the equipment room, and is regular volunteer for her church.

From your Sec./Treasurer

Having been one who always tried to stay in shape I have been doing a lot of walking since the early 80,s. Just May of last year I thought I would try and kick it up a notch. So I tried the running game. It was slow going at first. Run 30 yards, walk 30 yards, run 30m yards. It took a while but I finally got my first mile completed. Then, in November 2003, Edie bought me a treadmill for my birthday. So over the winter I continued to run until it warmed up enough to get back outside. I was doing well and ran in the Grosse Ile Memorial Day 8K (About 5 miles) run. I did it in 48 min and 47 sec. Eleven days later I ran in the Zanglin Downriver 8K run. Did it in 47:10. Came in 10 of 16 in my age group (60 to 64). Not bad for a guy of 61 and running for just a year. My next goal is to run in a half marathon. It is going slowly, as it should, and I will keep you informed.

Bruce Raleigh
Sec./Treasurer