

President's Message

Greetings to our Airborne Community

I hope the Summer 2009 edition of the PARAGLIDE finds all having a warm, safe, and blessed summer.

Currently, someone believes we need to water the grass as it has been raining for the last few days, but I know those in the south east welcome the rain and new increased water levels. So far, traveling to meet members and to enjoy their fellowship has gone very well without any weather delays.

Travel actually began with the STATIC LINE Awards in Atlanta. What a turn out! More than expected for both dinners and the Saturday night dinner was packed. Very few tables had an empty seat. As in every year, there were a few missing who had passed away, but one of the reasons for being Atlanta is remembrance. Uncle Don was one of those Airborne veterans that were missed. But the STATIC LINE staff and the Atlanta Chapter went out of their way to make sure the event continued as before and was very well organized. National Director Chet Cassidy from the Wolverine chapter was named the "Man of the Year" for the Association. For those that could not make Atlanta, for whatever reason, you really missed the continuation of the yearly remembrance.

Next, the wife and I were on the way to Dayton, Ohio and the General Ridgway Chapter's "Legend Affair." This is an annual event hosted by the chapter in remembrance of their members and General Ridgway that included a toast to the General and the Division. My thanks to Chapter Chairman Sam Dickey and the chapter members for the invitation as my wife Karen and I really enjoyed the visit. Also in attendance were PP's Ben Beekman and Shirley Gossett and their wives; along with Association Historian Bob Stonerock who gave a briefing on the status of historical articles of the Association.

Then it was back to Detroit, Michigan as the wife and I were invited to the James W. Etherton Detroit Chapter Installation where I swore in the new officers for the year 2009. Also in attendance were MG West and his wife as they now live in the Warren area. MG West is now the Commander of the Tank Command in Warren, Michigan and has served within the Division and at one time was the "6" for the Golden Grizzlies. MG West also presented several awards to chapter chairman Jim Etherton for his service to the veterans and Airborne communities. It was good to see many old friends again and thanks to Skip for seeing that order was maintained throughout the event.

I never tire of writing about our Wounded Warriors and those that go out of their way to support these soldiers. I could mention lots of individuals but as of now only a few. There are two Association members, both past National Directors, Carl Bludau and Bill Eberle. Carl is the driving force behind the Wounded



Steve Frazer

Warriors event held in Port O'Connor, Texas. A weekend of sun, fun, and fishing in a Texas style. This year was again a huge success and everyone that made that weekend a success is to be congratulated.

Also, thanks to Bill for taking control of the Association project of sending Wounded Warriors to the National Convention. Bill volunteered to become the "Point of Contact" (POC) for this project. He and his staff coordinate between the chapters and the Division for the movement of these soldiers. Thanks to Bill and Carl for their efforts.

As we all know there was no All American Week this year. However, MG Scaporrotti and CSM Capel arranged a modified version of this yearly event, starting Monday the 18th with the Division run in a chilly, misty rain. Later, the skies cleared and at 1400 hrs the All American Memorial Ceremony was held at the Division museum. The guest speaker was LTG Lloyd Austin, Commander 18th Airborne Corps, who gave a powerful and moving speech. Also, present were many Gold Star families as, unfortunately, more names were added to the Memorial. After the ceremony MG Scaporrotti, CSM Capel, and Division Headquarters left for Afghanistan. Good luck and God bless to all for a safe journey and return.

A safe trip for those going to our 65th Annual Convention. Keep our soldiers and their families in your prayers.

GOD—COUNTRY—FAMILY—AIRBORNE

Passing of a Test Platoon Member

Benjamin C. Reese passed away on 18 March 2009 at the age of 92. Ben was well known to the Airborne Community at Fort Benning having attended almost every Airborne Awards Festival and Parachute Test Platoon Reunion over the past several decades.

A rural country boy from south-west Georgia, he joined the Army on 1 June 1939 and later volunteered for the Parachute Test Platoon. In June 1940 Ben deployed to Europe with the 502 PIR, 82d Airborne Division and made two combat jumps. He retired from the service as a Chief Warrant Officer on 1 September 1969 with over 30 years of service.

He is survived by his spouse, Verne, and two sons.

ON THE COVER

Master Sgt. John Nombrano, noncommissioned officer in charge, Red Team, Combined Joint Task Force-82, Maj. Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, the commander of the 82nd Airborne Division and CJTF-82, Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Capel, 82nd Abn. Div., CJTF-82 and Pfc. Richell Vannieuwenhuyzen, finance specialist, CJTF-82 take part in a cake-cutting ceremony to honor and celebrate the Army's 234th birthday, June 14, at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan. In keeping with the Army tradition of having the oldest and youngest Soldier cutting the cake, Nombrano, 60, from San Angelo, Texas and Vannieuwenhuyzen, 18 from Troy, Mo., were bestowed the honor during this year's celebration. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Michael Armstrong)