



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS 914<sup>TH</sup> AIRLIFT WING  
2720 KIRKBRIDGE DRIVE  
NIAGARA FALLS ARS, NEW YORK 14304-5000**



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**MILITARY RETIREE NEWSLETTER  
"STILL SERVING"**

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February – April 2016

**FROM THE DIRECTOR**



Earlier newsletters had mentioned other activities that we are planning. We have not heard from anyone regarding their desires. Please give us a quick call to help us? It will be appreciated by your fellow retirees. We'll wait for you. Go ahead call 236-2389.

As a retiree myself, I know it is hard to get motivated to do any kind of physical activity. We can always come up with excuses. We rely on doctors too much. They can medicate, but it won't address the lack of activity. The activities that we are planning are not exhaustive for seniors. Wouldn't it be nice to do Tai Chi on the beach in Hawaii? Guess what? Niagara Falls isn't close to being as nice, but the results can help you regain your balance and give your "hard body" a little boost. We will start the program on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:30 am, at the base gym, starting in March and continuing for eight weeks. Please call the office to let us know you will be there. We can also give any updates between newsletters. I will try to get "special guests" periodically. Mike Williams will have a Certified Tai Chi instructor geared specifically for seniors. There is also a Certified Physiologist on staff for this. Please call 236-2389 for more information. If no answer, leave a message and our volunteers will call you back. You can have fun and at the same time be active. Your children and grandchildren will be proud of you more than ever. Enough of the commercials! Well, maybe one more.

Kelly at MWR has been planning various activities for all retirees and full time and reserve personnel. They have not been well attended and are in danger of not having any shopping, concerts, sports games and other trips. They cannot afford to keep losing money, which they have. In this newsletter, I hope to let you know what events you can participate in. Please try to attend some of these events. You will have a good time and maybe meet some nice people or old friends! Call them for more information on free local college sporting event tickets. Check with them about obtaining discounted tickets to Disney World.

We are also planning to establish a “FLASH” page on the 914<sup>th</sup> home page, so that any items of interest between the newsletters can be sent to you. We will let you know when that will occur.

## **HEALTH BENEFITS**

### **Veterans' Benefits Eligibility**

For the purposes of VA health benefits and services, a person who served in the active military and who was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable is a Veteran. Reserves or National Guard members with active duty for training purposes *only* do not meet the basic eligibility requirements. There are also veterans who are eligible for Enhanced Eligibility. Please check on-line at “va.gov/health benefits/apply/veterans.” The rules governing benefits have changed for the better (less emphasis on financial). Check with the VA to see if you are now eligible. Phone # is (800) 827-1000. There are also clinics in Niagara Falls and Lockport who may be able to assist you.

### **The Affordable Care Act and Your Taxes**

Under the ACA, all Americans must have health care coverage or pay a fine. Your TRICARE coverage meets the minimum essential coverage requirements. Beginning in January 2016, DFAS will provide IRS Form 1095-C to all US military members, Annuitants, former spouses and all other individuals having TRICARE coverage during any part of 2015. The forms will be required to be reported with your 2015 federal income tax return. DFAS will provide you with IRS Form 1095 series forms no later than January 31, 2016.

For more information, visit [www.irs.gov/Affordable-Care-Act](http://www.irs.gov/Affordable-Care-Act), or [www.dfas.mil/taxes/aca.html](http://www.dfas.mil/taxes/aca.html).

**Parkinson's Disease** – The VA has made Parkinson's disease a “presumptive condition” for certain Vietnam veterans due to Agent Orange and other herbicide exposure. This simplifies the

claims process. The disease usually has early symptoms: a tremor in one hand, or finger, or foot when resting. Other classic motor signs include rigidity (stiffness), slowed movements, and impaired balance. There is no comprehensive test, but diagnosis coupled with clinical findings from a complete physical and neurological exam can complete the findings. There is no cure, but various medications can help manage its symptoms. (Rear Admiral Joyce Johnson USPHS (Ret): DO, M.A.) More information on [www.moaa.org/wellness](http://www.moaa.org/wellness).

**VA Choice Program** has expanded eligibility based on the distance between a veteran's place of residence and the nearest VA facility using driving distance instead of straight line distance. They have also changed the mileage calculation for benefit travel. It will now be made using the fastest route instead of the shortest route. Any questions about the Choice Program, call (866) 606-8198.

### **TRICARE Pharmacy Co-pays Change February 1, 2016**

On February 1, 2016, most co-pays for prescription drugs at Home Delivery and retail network pharmacies will increase slightly. The 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) requires TRICARE to change its prescription co-pays. All drugs at military pharmacies and generic drugs through Home Delivery are still at no cost to beneficiaries. Co-pays for brand name drugs through Home Delivery increase from \$16 to \$20, for up to a 90 day supply. At retail pharmacies, generic drug co-pays go from \$8 to \$10, and brand name drug co-pays go from \$20 to \$24, for up to a 30 day supply. Co-pays for non-formulary drugs and for drugs at non-network pharmacies will also change. Beneficiaries can save up to \$208 in 2016 for each brand name drug if they switch from retail to Home Delivery. To see the new TRICARE pharmacy co-pays, learn more about the TRICARE Pharmacy benefit, or to move your prescription to Home Delivery, visit [www.tricare.mil/pharmacy](http://www.tricare.mil/pharmacy)

## **LOCAL**

**Base Exchange Closure** - The Niagara BX will be closed on weekends, except for UTA weekends (usually the first and second weekends of the month). This is In effect now. For questions, you may call them at 236-2100.

ALL veterans and military members are invited to the Seneca Niagara Resort and Casino on the third Wednesday of the month, from 11am – 9 pm for a free buffet. Show your ID card or other proof of service.

## QUICK HITS

- **Edelweiss** (Germany) is **not** now authorized to be used by US military retirees, due to the objection of the German government contained in the Status of Forces Act (SOFA).
- **From the American Merchant Marine Veterans** – well-known American made brand Fruit of the Loom, is not made in the US anymore. This brand now comes from Costa Rica. When you next plan to purchase items, check the labels. There are hundreds of other well known American companies who have moved their HQ offshore. They include: American Express, Coca Cola, Eastman Kodak, Dow Chemical, Ford, Google, Honeywell and Bank of New York. Also other American food products besides Smithfield Hams and “chicken nuggets”, come from China. Seven/Eleven is now HQed in Japan; Frigidaire is now in Sweden; Purina is now in Switzerland; Vaseline is now HQed in England and on and on. Labor is cheaper, but ask your representatives why are we assisting this?
- **There will be no COLA increase in 2016 for Military and Social Security recipients.** This is due mainly to the lower gas prices on the CPI (Consumer Price Index).
- **Military discounts on cell phone service.** Each mobile phone provider offers discounts to military members. Check with your provider and others to get the best deal.
- **IRS** – Your 1099 Form should have become available in mid December. You will be able to access your on MYPay “:https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx”. DFAS will mail a hard copy to those who have chosen this option. To contact DFAS Retired and Annuitant Pay, you can mail, telephone or fax.

For Retirees – mail: DFAS, US Military Retired Pay, PO Box 7130, London, KY 40742-7130.  
Fax (800) 469-6559 and Annuitant Survivor Pay (800) 982-8459.

For Annuitants/beneficiaries/and survivors – DFAS, US Annuitant Pay, Box 7131, London, KY 40742-7131; Phone ( 8 am – 5 pm weekdays) (800) 321-1080 option 1. Local (216) 522-5955.

**Survivor Benefit Plan** – Does your current spouse know whether or not you chose to take the SBP? Do you know? On the back of the yearly DD form 1099 (needed to file your federal income tax), it will tell you what your status is for this. If you were previously married, it will be a little more complicated if the previous spouse is named and the courts have so decreed.

- **General Curtis LeMay Foundation** – This foundation offers free financial help for widows of deceased **Air Force retirees** wherever they are residing, for as long as necessary. The RAO

has applications.

## GENERAL INTEREST

### Casualty Assistance

#### *New Year, New Challenges!*

Hopefully, we will all have a good year! BUT.....just in case.....let's make sure our dependents know what to do in the event .....You know! Start, or update, a folder with your important documents for your loved ones, so they will have less stress after you've gone. If anyone needs assistance when all your documents are gathered, call us for an appointment to go over your particular situation.

This service is created for surviving spouses of retirees and other veterans. The local contact point is the RAO at Niagara 236-2389 or Pittsburgh, another source of help. Martin W. Patterson [martin.patterson.1@us.af.mil](mailto:martin.patterson.1@us.af.mil). 911<sup>th</sup> AW Casualty Assistance Officer (412) 474-8558. or (800) 235-7780.

In the event of the death of a retiree, either of these sources can help. In order to facilitate the process, you should have the following items available:

- DD 214 (discharge papers)\*
- Retired pay statement
- VA paperwork, if applicable,
- Current will
- Marriage Certificate, if applicable
- Divorce decree, if applicable
- A listing of bank accounts and account numbers
- Copies of existing life insurance policies with phone numbers and policy numbers
- Civil Service paperwork, if a civil service retiree
- Make sure the surviving spouse has a current, valid ID card and knows if there is a SBP (Survivor Benefit Plan) by checking the back of the 1099 form used for income tax preparation.

## PERSONAL NEWS

In October 2015, I had the occasion of escorting Major Arthur Cline, also an RAO volunteer and WWII

veteran on the Warrior Flight to see the WWII Monument and others in Washington DC. It was sponsored by Robert Ortt, State Senator from Niagara County and by a generous donation from Wal-Mart. This flight was initiated by former State Senator George Maziarz. It was my honor to travel with these vets, some from the Korean “conflict”, also. We were flown by Southwest Airlines to BWI and bused to DC. It was a long day! We departed Buffalo/Niagara Airport at about 0700 and arrived about an hour later. The flight attendants announced the Veterans on-board and the other passengers applauded. Departing the plane at BWI and entering the main terminal, they also received a great applause and cheering.

Boarding the bus to go to DC, there were two physically-unable-to-walk veterans in wheelchairs. The bus had a lift that took them at the sliding side door and into the bus. The trip was about an hour. We first arrived at the WWII Memorial Monument. After about an hour, we departed for the Korean conflict Memorial, where Congressman Brain Higgins greeted us and gave a verbal salute and pictures were taken. We had time to also see the Vietnam War Memorial and had lunch, at no cost, at the park concession. We then took a ride to Arlington Cemetery. We observed the “Changing of the Guard” ceremony and then went to the Dubliner Restaurant for dinner. Again, there was no cost to us. We left there and took a short tour of the city, then on to BWI.

We left BWI for Buffalo. On arriving at Buffalo, the firefighters provided a “water cannon arch” that the airplane went through. It was awesome!!! There were also firefighters who greeted us inside the terminal. Since there were no outgoing flights there were no other greeters. However, when .going through the exit from the secure area, there were two color guards from veterans’ groups and family members who also cheered us. There were also tears of joy. Some may say that I had them too. Truly, they are the Greatest Generation!

A great deal of appreciation and thanks are due to the organizers and sponsors, who contacted participants, conducted a preliminary meeting and finally carried out the flight and tour. All the veterans that were there really appreciated the trip. Maybe a once in a lifetime event for some. Thank you Senator Ortt for hosting!

## **SPACE AVAILABLE FLIGHTS**

### **TRIP TO GEORGETOWN, KENTUCKY**

September 11 -13 2015

I hit a home run on the weekend of Sept 11-13. Rain was scheduled for the entire Buffalo region and did not look pleasant. I decided to try to fly out to Georgetown, Kentucky with the 914<sup>th</sup> AW. Their mission this time was to support a local air show. The showtime was at 1240 for a1530 takeoff. We

arrived in Georgetown Regional Airport at 1730. Enterprise was waiting to “pick me up”. The vehicle cost for the three days was \$44.15 total!

I left for the state capitol of Frankfort, which was about 20 miles away. The capitol building was closed for the weekend, however when I told the security guard that I was military, he gave me a personal tour of the building that was made of marble and granite.

Saturday, I toured Mammoth Caves National Park. I have toured 37 of the 58 national parks. This park is completely underground with about 400 miles of caverns. My senior National Park Passport gives me free access and 50% off the price of the various tours. The tours are all guided by park rangers and very well attended. I took the Historical Tour and another one to get a sense and enormity of the park.

I went back to Georgetown Saturday and unwittingly stayed at the same hotel as the crew. The normal price was \$120, but reduced for the military to \$83.50! I left for the airport on Sunday and left the car there. After a scheduled 0930 takeoff, we arrived at Niagara at 1130 in plenty of time for the 1300 kickoff for the Bills opener.....and it is still raining. Good move on my part.

This was my 112<sup>th</sup> Space A trip, out of Niagara Falls AFB, but who’s counting  
Gene Baran, CPT, USA, Retired

## **PITTSBURGH TO SIGONELLA**

My trip started with a curious phone call on Thursday 15 October at 1400 hrs. I wanted to hear what flights that the reserve unit (C 130s) from Pittsburgh had for the month of October. I was told that a flight leaving for Sigonella, Sicily, Naval Air Station at 1500 on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October. Can I change on a dime? Am I flexible enough? Do I want to be in Buffalo with a weather forecast calling for snow flurries? Oh yes I can!

I got up early that day (0915) and called to confirm the flight and showtime @ 1330. I left home at 1015 and stopped twice for fuel (\$30 plus tolls.) and food. Arrived in Pittsburgh at 1352. The Space A guy said to me “we are waiting for you, but take your time “

Two Space A passengers, 13 aero med personnel and a crew of seven from Seymour-Johnson Base in North Carolina took off in their KC 135 (tanker) at 1530. I got my own bunk and slept some until we arrived in Sigonella II in Sicily at 0500. There are two separate parts of the Base. Sigonella I I (NAS II), where the Commissary and BX and theaters are along with the Navy Lodge and NAS I where the terminal and base personnel are housed. I walked less than 10 minutes from the terminal and got a room at the Gateway Suites (\$84) until checkout Sunday on October 18<sup>th</sup> at 1100. At 0745, I walked 3 minutes to the galley and had breakfast (\$3.45). I inquired about renting a car at the terminal and they were closed for the day! Finally, after calling three cab companies, the fourth said 40 Euros to Catania. It is the second largest city in Sicily and 25km away. I toured the city enjoying the Italian

culture. I visited the Cathedrale Duomo (church) in the Piazza Del Duomo at 1500. I talked to two women who explained that church services were at 1800. I continued my city tour and back for church services at 1800, then looked for a restaurant. At 2000 hrs, I ran into the same two women from Texas and had dinner with them (linguine with scampi for 19 Euros). They had a vehicle and gave me a ride back to NAS I.

Sunday morning, back to the galley at 0845, worked out for an hour, stopped at the terminal and was informed that the crew is leaving earlier than planned, due to winter winds from the West. I hustled back to the Gateway Lodge, showered and packed and went back to the terminal at 1040. We boarded the bus to the plane at 1050 and said "Arrividerci" to Sicily as we took off at 1120. Ten and a half hours later, we arrived in Pittsburg aboard the KC135 (same aircraft we came on). This was my first time to Sicily. It was 30 degrees warmer than Buffalo/Niagara. I had spent approximately \$149, plus 59 Euros. This was my seventh trip with the 911<sup>th</sup> AW who fly C 130s. For flights to Europe, they contract with other units with different aircraft, because of the distance. The C130's range would not allow them to fly that far without refueling.

*Gene Baran*

*CPT, USA, Retired*

## **RETIREE FUTURES**

We also would like to conduct events to enlighten all retirees about their benefits. This may include health care, travel, Survivor Benefits Plan; free eyeglasses for the retiree, burial benefits along with some of the MWR sponsored trips from the base and other areas of interest to you. In order for us to proceed with planning, we need your input! PLEASE call the office (716) 236-2389! If your desires are personal in nature, e mail to "[joseph.reele@us.af.mil](mailto:joseph.reele@us.af.mil)". It will be kept confidential! If there is no interest, we will not proceed. Any and all ideas will be considered. We can employ the services of experts in these fields and also schedule individual sessions.

## **RETIREE APPRECIATION DAY SET**

On September 17, 2016, the RAD will be held at the Heritage Center on Niagara Falls ARS starting with an 0800 registration. Rooms at the lodging facility will be available on a Space A basis. Reservations should be made NLT 15 August.(236-2014). If you have not stayed on base, you are in for a nice surprise. The facility is a first class venue.

Lunch can be purchased (cash only) at the buffet or hot line. Club members will receive a \$1 discount, if purchase is over \$6. There will also be a quick bus tour of the base.

This will be a great event for you and your spouse to learn more about the benefits and changes, if

any, that you have earned.

## **FUN PAGE**

Yogi isms – “you better cut the pizza into four pieces because I’m not hungry enough to eat six”.

*(Yogi has received the Presidential Medal of Honor posthumously. This is the nation’s highest civilian award. (Nov 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015).*

## **BET YA DIDN’T KNOW.....**

Years ago, common entertainment included playing cards. However, there was a tax levied when buying playing cards, but only applicable to the “Ace of Spades”. To avoid paying the tax, people would purchase 51 cards instead. Yet, since most games required 52 cards, these people were thought to be stupid or dumb because they weren’t “playing with a full deck”. Know anyone?

## **THINGS YOU WOULD NEVER ADMIT**

Nothing sucks more than that moment during an argument when you realize you are wrong!

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