



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



**MILITARY RETIREE NEWSLETTER (SEPT - NOV 2017)  
"STILL SERVING"**

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**FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK**

IMPORTANT NEWS! We at the RAO are saddened to report that Colonel Brian Bowman will take his leave from us in the form of retirement; he announced his decision on July 6, 2017. Colonel Bowman has been a tremendous friend of the retirees in the area, especially this office. It is a well-deserved option for him after a stellar career. Together with his wife, Jimmie, their efforts for this base and our community here have earned many praises and they leave a lasting legacy that won't be soon forgotten. We thank you and wish you God Speed in your future endeavors.

A change of command ceremony will be held during the September 10th UTA; details TBA. If you are interested in attending, please call Kelly Nowasell at (716) 236-2122.

The new Wing Commander will be Colonel Mark S. Larson. His prior assignment was as wing commander at McConnell AFB in Wichita, Kansas. Colonel Larson flew missions during Desert Shield, Desert Storm, as well as Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom; he's also served as instructor pilot and evaluator, in addition to a C17 Globemaster pilot. His biography may be found at the 931st ARW home site or just by searching, "Colonel Mark S Larson USAF Biography".

Welcome aboard Colonel Larson! We look forward to working with you!

We would like to host workshops on base periodically. If you have an idea for what benefits to cover, I ask you to please reply to me directly @ [jtreele117@hotmail.com](mailto:jtreele117@hotmail.com). The volunteers at the office are willing to do this, my personal favorite subject area, Space Available flying/lodging. There are experts available in these and other areas that can bring their expertise and resources in to relate their information. The RAO has tentatively planned a workshop in the near future, details TBA. If you have a particular area of interest, please contact us! (716-236-2389)

AIRSHOW! June 9 & 10, 2018 will bring another air show to Niagara; we need your input! Your local RAO will also be at the air show to answer questions and offer assistance. In the meantime, if anyone would like to volunteer in our office, call at (716) 236-2389. We always need knowledgeable people who are willing to donate a few hours per week for your fellow veterans. It is a very rewarding way to meet others that have also served and offer your assistance, see you there!

### **QUICK HITS**

#### *Need a copy of your DD 214?*

Go to <https://vetrecs.archives.gov>. You may also call (202) 354-5000 or use SF-180 (available online or at the Retiree Activities Office at Niagara Falls ARB.)

#### *TRICARE*

TRICARE covers hospice care, and it may also cover home care/nursing in your home. Medicare certified hospice facilities or in-patient acute care facilities are also covered. For more information, call TRICARE, North Region at 1-877-TRI-CARE (1-877-894-2273).

#### *National Resource Directory*

This directory is a web-based network of care coordinators, providers, and support partners with for the wounded, ill, and injured service members, veterans, their families, families of the fallen, and those who support them. Go to <https://www.nrd.gov/>.

#### *Change of Address?*

You should immediately notify DFAS to update your new information!

- **Retirees:** DFAS,US Military Retirement Pay, PO Box 7130,London,KY 40742-7130; Phone 1-800-321-1080 Option 1.
- **Annuitants:** DFAS,US Military Accounting Service.US Military Annuitant Pay, PO Box 7131, London, KY 40742-7131; Phone :1-800-321-1080 Option 5.

#### *VA Disability*

Qualified veterans may be eligible for a 100% temporary disability rating; for instance if you have a knee replacement, the VA may grant you 100% disability rating for 13 months (normal recovery time for such surgery). The VA can answer questions regarding this type of disability, as always be weary when dealing with private lawyers who claim they can get you “free money” from the VA.

*Taken from Military.com 09AUG2017*

## **Changes for TRICARE**

The 2017 National Defense Authorization Act required some changes to the TRICARE health system. For those currently enrolled in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE for Life, you can rest easy as there are no changes. Beginning on 01JAN2018, enrollment in TRICARE Standard/Select becomes the default. The DOD will be sending reminders around the time of this publication. Starting in January 2020, TRICARE Standard/Select will have an annual premium, similar to TRICARE Prime; the annual premium will start at \$150 for individuals and \$300 for families, other premiums will be based on the same COLA as retired pay. The catastrophic cap will increase from \$3,000 to \$3,500 per year, the cap remains at \$1,000 a year for currently serving families.

Other new programs are also on the horizon including vision and dental plans. Lt. Col. Shane Ostrom (USAF Retired) quotes Sergeant Schulz from Hogan's Heroes, "We know nothing, yet!"

*Taken from MOAA, JUN2017.*

## **VETERAN SHOPPING AT EXCHANGES ONLINE**

Effective 11NOV2017, any honorably discharged veteran will be authorized shopping privileges online only. They will be able to shop, online at all exchanges:

- <https://www.shopmyexchange.com/>
- <https://shopcgx.com/>
- [www.mymcx.com](http://www.mymcx.com)
- <https://www.mynavyexchange.com/>

To find out if you are qualified, go to <https://www.vetverify.org/>. If you currently have eligibility to shop online or in-store, there are no changes being made.

## **HELPFUL LINKS / CONTACTS**

The following sites were taken from a newsletter published by the New York National Guard Family Programs (Joining Community Forces). There are many helpful programs out there that are not very well known or used; these programs are utilized by all branches.

- <https://www.lawhelpny.org/>  
An area for Vets and military to click on for your ZIP code and look for specific areas of law, there are lawyers on hand to answer questions, call (315) 781-1465.
- <https://www.vettix.org>  
Charity site that donates tickets to sporting events, concerts, etc for registered veterans
- Free smoke alarms  
Contact Pearlle Mae Hargo at [pearliemae.hargo@redcross.org](mailto:pearliemae.hargo@redcross.org) or call (716)878-2356.
- <http://www.compeerbuffalo.org/>  
Veteran Families Support & Activity Group - for more info call Tina Caviness at (716)883-0110

- <http://www.thanksusa.org/>  
Scholarships for spouses of military personnel
- [www.vocwny.org](http://www.vocwny.org)  
Veterans' One Stop Center of WNY
- [www.military.com](http://www.military.com)  
Useful for questions (with answers) regarding retirement, benefits, etc...
- <https://www.dfas.mil/>  
Frequently asked questions regarding retirement
- <http://www.spacea.net/>  
Patriot Express Schedules
- <https://militaryadvantage.military.com/2017/06/va-standardizing-caregiver-plan-before-opening-to-older-vets/>  
VA Standardizing Care Giver Plan

### **SPACE A TRIP TO WRIGHT PATTERSON AFB**

On May 24th, a quick trip to WP proved to be a great trip. We had the opportunity to see the Air Force Museum of the United States. It was over thirty years ago since I first saw it and it has increased immensely; it is now comprised of four hangers and outdoor displays.

We started at the furthest hanger and worked our way back to the beginning. It was approximately one quarter of a mile to the fourth hanger. Inside it housed, three Presidential airplanes including FDR's, Eisenhower's, and JFK's. There were also countless exhibits including the SR71 Blackbird, space capsules, and experimental aircraft. The other hangers housed WWII airplanes, both Japanese and German, as well as Mexican and Argentinean aircraft. There was a hanger with exhibits from the Cold War era and Vietnam.

There is no charge for the museum and electric carts may also be used free of charge. I used a cart and it really made the tour less painful. There are two cafeterias in the complex and a large gift shop. It was a tiring trip, but made me feel proud. Our airmen and women are some of the best in the world. As usual, the aircrew and others were truly professional and capable! My thanks to all who made this trip pleasurable. Colonel Bowman and his staff should be proud of the men and women who assisted. To name a few players: Major Scozzafava, CMSGT Buschang, SMSGT Yamanaco, Alexa Gigliotti, Holly Curcione and countless others behind the scenes. My personal thanks to all involved! For our Navy brothers and sisters, Pensacola, Florida is the home of Naval Aviation Museum. Don't forget, later this year there will be many Space A flights. Once the crews are trained and "certified", be ready to go! There will be many more and more distant missions. Again, without

knowing for sure where these missions will go, I can only speculate that there will be some to, for instance, Hawaii, Italy, Germany, England and other places

I suggest that you call the Space A information line (716) 236-2360 periodically for any unscheduled flights. You may also check with other nearby air bases for their missions. Their Facebook web pages are noted on <http://www.spacea.net/>. As a suggestion, try the Pittsburgh ARS, Youngstown, Ohio ARS, Newburgh, NY ANG, Chicopee, MA ARB, and Trenton, NJ AFB . Some more distant opportunities can be found at Norfolk NAS, Mitchell Field in Milwaukee, Dover, DE AFB and Pease ANGB in New Hampshire.

### **Guest Column**

*Gene Baran (CPT USA RET)*

Space A flights from Niagara are rare lately due to the transition to the KC 135 aircraft. However, I have done some commercial traveling recently to various parts of the US. This is a review of Air Reserve Stations that are adjacent to commercial airports like here at Niagara Falls.

I traveled to the upper Midwest and flew into Minneapolis-St. Paul International ARS adjacent to the airport. I stayed overnight at the base, @\$60/night, in a good, clean, updated room, and one minute from the front gate. This base is used by Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines, and yet easy to get a room. A nice feature for some is that you are only about 8-9 miles from the Mall of America.

Another ARS to consider is at Youngstown, Ohio. It is smaller and isolated and also adjacent to the Youngstown commercial airport. The beauty of the connection is that Allegiant Airlines flies to and from Tampa International often (twice a week). Youngstown ARS fly to MacDill AFB often. If you want to extend your stay in Tampa, you can get back easily. The base is located about 5 minutes from the commercial airport. Another side note about Youngstown is that it has excellent, new lodging facilities and highly recommended by the RAO Director at Niagara Falls ARS. The trip to Youngstown is about a 3 hour, easy drive from WNY.

Pittsburgh ARS is another nearby option. It shares the runway with Pittsburgh International Airport. The lodging is also excellent as there are two new buildings, three years old and only 10 minutes from the commercial airport. Their big advantage is that there are two Air Force unit bases there. The 911th AW flies the C130s and the 174th ARW has KC 135s. It is about a 4 hour drive from WNY. General Billy Mitchell International Airport and ARS is the only other ARS that I know of that is "close", but has no housing.

Lodging is probably not available at most bases on drill weekends.  
Fly the friendly skies of the US Air Force (and Navy in some cases).

**LAST MINUTE ITEM**

State Senator Rob Ortt's office will take names for those WWII, Korea, and Vietnam veterans who wish to go to Washington D.C. to see their monuments. If interested, call (716)434-0860 ASAP; the trip is free for those veterans!

### **JUST FOR FUN**

- When is a retiree's bedtime?
  - Three hours after he falls asleep on the couch
- What do retirees call a long lunch?
  - Normal.
- Why don't retirees mind being called senior citizen?
  - The term comes with a 10% discount

### **Military Facts**

- 31 of the 43 men who have served as President of the United States have served in the military.
  - One received the Medal of Honor. Theodore Roosevelt.
  - Only one, James Buchanan, never became an officer.
- Fewer than 100 people have received the title of honorary Marine, a title that can only be bestowed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Here are a few names and ranks in order of their seniority:
  - Chuck Norris (rank unknown and not needed)
  - BG Bob Hope
  - MSG Bugs Bunny
  - CPL Jim Nabors, star of Gomer Pyle, USMC
  - Gary Sinise

*(taken from Military.com)*

*“Some people live an entire life and wonder if they have ever made a difference in the world. A veteran doesn't have that problem.”*

-Ronald Reagan

### **DISCLAIMER:**

The retiree Activities Office Newsletter is published by the Retiree Activities Office to inform retirees and their families of matters affecting their military rights, benefits, activities, and obligations. While every effort is made to verify information in the newsletter, neither the editor nor the RAO staff can guarantee the accuracy of information received from outside sources. The editor reserves the right to reduce the length of the material to fit the space available. **Joseph T. Reele (1SG USA, Ret.) - Director/Editor**

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**OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
FIRST CLASS**



Airman & Family Readiness	(716) 236-2097	IRS	800-829-1040
Base Exchange	(716) 236-2100	IT&T Services (tickets)	(716) 236-3367
Base Billeting	(716) 236-2014	Legal Aid	(716) 236-2133
Base Gym (Fitness Center)	(716) 236-2101	Medicare	800-442-8430
Casualty Assistance	877-353-6807	Pass & ID Security	(716) 236-2281
Pittsburgh Office	800-235-7780	PAX Terminal (Niagara)	(716) 236-2360
Chapel	(716) 236-2395	Retired Activities Office	(716) 236-2389
Credit Union	(716) 236-2085	RAO Fax	(716) 236-3173
Customer Service ID	(716) 236-2197	Recreation Center	(716) 236-2450
DEERS	800-538-9552	Social Security	800-772-1213
DELTA Dental	888-838-8737	Space-A Travel	(716) 236-2389
DFAS (Cleveland)	800-321-1080	TRICARE	877-874-2273
Equipment Rental	(716) 236-3511/2101	TRICARE for LIFE	866-773-0404
Express Scripts Pharmacy	877-363-1303	VA Affairs	800-827-1000
Falcon Club Café	(716) 236-2027	VA Affairs	888-VETS-NYS
Family Support Center	(716) 236-2097	VA Hospitals	800-532-8387
Ft. Drum SB	800-772-6900	VA Hospital (Buffalo)	(716) 834-9200
Ft. Drum Pharmacy	800-354-9280	Veterans One-Step Center	(716) 898-0110

