



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



**MILITARY RETIREE NEWSLETTER (NOVEMBER – JANUARY 2017)
“STILL SERVING”**

JOSEPH T REELE
1SG USA RETIRED
DIRECTOR/EDITOR
Co-editor: Janice Reele

RAO Office Contact/Hours	
Telephone:	(716) 236-2389
Email:	Joseph.Reele@us.af.mil
<i>Mon - Fri (UTA Sat)</i>	<i>1000-1400</i>

FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK:

Spring and Summer have come and gone, and Fall is well underway. Guess what’s next? It starts with a “W” (for “We can do it!”). Some of us head South or West to escape the cold; the rest of us just stay and complain. If you can, take advantage of Space A and go to warmer climes like Hawaii, Sicily, or other US military bases to get warm; only five months until Spring!

In regards to the RAD (Retired Activities Day) that was held on September 17th, it was well received and I’ve heard a lot of positive feedback and ‘buzz’. The planning was immense and complicated, and I appreciated the assistance of all who helped planned, particularly LTC Andrea Pitruzzella from the 914th AW, she was unflappable and made it look easy. Thank you Andrea! The other 914th units assistance was also professional and contributed to the success of the program. Thank you to the committee members who persevered and did an excellent job! There were about 183 retirees and spouses that attended.

The orientation flights had a slight hitch, but recovered. Many retirees and spouses were able to enjoy the trip around the area and over the Falls! Most retirees (and spouses), have never tried Space Available flying. To that end, the RAO held a Space A workshop on September 28th at the Family Readiness center. The participants were asked to determine a destination and the RAO staff assisted in the planning of their future adventure. There were approximately 15 attendees. We hope they went away with more knowledge and confidence from this meeting. Thanks to Simon Shakarjian and Gene Baran for their assistance! The watchword from the workshop was “flexibility”!

For the RAD itself, there were approximately 92 Army retirees, 40 Air Force 12 Navy and 5 USMC. There were no Coast Guard retirees present. There were approximately 55.7% under 65 and 44.3% over 65. The RAO now has at least four more volunteers due to the RAD. I am very appreciative for these and the present volunteers. There are now at least 22 new recipients of the newsletter. There were 72 ZIP codes represented as well. The numbers are only approximate, in that, some people did not sign in or did not fill out the forms completely. I am just happy that they came and, hopefully, were enlightened. Some people commented that we should have it again at the Niagara Falls base. The committee plans for a Fall, 2018 RAD at the Niagara ARS.

Some of the e-mail addresses that people wrote down were illegible. If you know of someone who signed up for the newsletter at the RAD, and did not receive it, tell them to go to “914th AW” home page and click on retiree newsletter. Have them also call the office (716) 236-2389 and leave their e-mail address.

If you have suggestions for any other retiree functions, please give us a call (716) 236-2389 to discuss and we will try to accommodate.

LOCAL:

WNY Freedom Lounge

The Buffalo-Niagara International Airport now has a private lounge area for all military (including retirees). The WNY Freedom Lounge opened on October 3rd, 2016, it offers light refreshments, comfortable surroundings, and camaraderie. The lounge is staffed by volunteers and will remain open as long as there are volunteers to staff it, it is located on the ground floor near the Eastern baggage area. Free admission is by military ID. Friends and family are also invited.

Free Flu Shots

Most medical insurances offer free flu shots. The VA has partnered with Walgreens to offer the same. You must be under the VA Healthcare in order to participate. You will need a Veterans' ID card and photo ID. Check with your Walgreens and the VA with any questions. There is a secondary pneumonia shot recommended for seniors, check with your doctor or pharmacy.

November 2016

We are losing a great asset of the RAO effective November 2016. Donna Jellison, the administrative assistant for 914TH Support Squadron, will be retiring after many years of faithful service. She has been a great help to our office. When we changed from hard copy newsletter to digital, she initiated and sent out your newsletter on line. She has also "kept us in line", so to speak and helped us get things done the proper way. We wish Donna and her husband a long and healthy retirement. Thank you!

A new addition is Alexa Gigliotti, the Marketing Director at ITT (also in building #314). She has taken on an important job with a difficult goal. Joe Scrivani is the ITT Agent in the office and has years of experience to help serve you. This service needs your support in order to provide certain benefits, trips, etc. To this end, they are offering a day trip of shopping to Grove City, Pennsylvania at their shopping mall. Included is a side trip to the Volant Amish Village nearby. There are at least two Amish-type eateries in the village for lunch. Last year, the trip was a success, although not financially. The cost for this return trip is \$43 per person and requires 45 people minimum. There are still some seats available. The trip includes the bus trip with pickup at the Summit Mall and one stop for snacks. There is a bathroom on the bus. This will be the second year that Jan (my wife) will be going. She really enjoys the trip, shopping and the social aspect of meeting new people of similar interests. Talk to your friends and have a relaxed day and evening with them. The bus is scheduled to arrive back home at about 930PM. If interested, call the ITT office at (716) 236-3090.

These events and others like them have to at least break even or they cannot be funded under present budgets. In the past, there have been winery tours and NYC day trips. If anyone has any suggestions, please call Alexa or Joe at (716) 236-3090; she encourages all comments. ITT also sells discounted tickets to various events (Disney, Armed Forces Vacation Club, etc) and free tickets to others, such as UB football games. We also have two, maybe four new volunteers for the RAO office. PO1 Joseph Lewis, USN (Ret) is on board now and soon there will be two US Army veterans and possibly a civilian, USAF trained volunteer for UTA Saturdays. Another volunteer for UTA Saturdays is a USAF retiree, trained in the medical, TRICARE areas; stay tuned.

NATIONAL:

New Military Retired Pay Plan...

...takes effect January 1, 2018; Congress created the first new retired pay plan in a generation when it passed the National Defense Authorization Act of 2016. For the first time, service members will be responsible for contributing to and managing part of their retirement savings plan. Though all presently retired service members will automatically join the new plan, called the Blended Retirement System, they will see no change to their pay plans.

The new provisions apply to all service members entering duty on or after January 1, 2018. Active duty members with less than 12 years of service on Dec 31, 2017, will have one year to opt into the new plan or stay with their current one. The new system is expected to save DoD \$4.8M over 10 years, and \$1 billion a year after full implementation. (ROA Newsletter Summer 2016)

Pentagon To Open Online Shopping To Vets In 2017

The DoD has given the OK to open online shopping to all honorably discharged veterans starting on Veterans' Day 2017. Opening commissary privileges to honorably discharged veterans is not included in this proposal. (Amy Bushatz –copyright 2016 Military.com); more information as it is received.

Honor America's Guard - Reserve Act (HR1384,S743)

Every year, more and more reserve component retirees learn that they cannot claim veteran status. These are retirees who were never ordered to active duty other than for initial training and brief periods of annual training. This bill would give them honorary veteran status. This bill has been introduced in the last four congresses. It has passed the House unanimously and is now in the Senate. Ask your Senator about this bill? Taken from an article of "Military.com Guide to Military and Veterans Benefits, August 2016.

Social Security & Pension Raises For 2017

The Social Security Administration has announced that there will be a 0.3% increase in Social Security payments for next year. Along with that is attached a similar increase of 0.3% increase in military pensions. However, there is a proposed increase in Medicare payments, so that the Social Security increase (approximately \$4/month) will be negated. These increases are determined by the CPI, or the forecast increases of certain goods.

Warriors' Flight

Due to light advertisement, the 2016 Warriors' Flight has come and gone. This flight is arranged by State Senator Robert Ort's office. I received information too late for this publication. I contacted his office and they said that we would be kept on file for next year. It is a fully sponsored trip to Washington, DC, for veterans of WWII, Korea and some Vietnam veterans in order to see their monuments of their era. The trip begins at the Buffalo airport, they then fly to Washington DC, are picked up by bus and spend the day visiting the monuments. [continued on next page]

The bus has wheelchair accessibility and lunch and dinner is paid by this grant. The "guardians" that accompany the veteran (usually not the spouse), also have their trip paid for as well. When this becomes available next year, we will communicate it to you. Thank you for your service. If anyone is interested now, please call the office (236-2389) and leave your name and phone number. We will forward this to Senator Ortt's office.

JUST FOR FUN:

Yogiisms

"You can observe a lot just by watching!"

-OR-

"Half the lies they tell about me aren't true!"

Thoughts

- How many times is it appropriate to say "What?" before you just nod your head and smile because you still didn't hear what they said?
- I love the sense of camaraderie when an entire line of cars teams up to prevent a jerk from cutting in at the front. Stay strong brothers!
- "Each generation will reap what the former generation has sown."
- "Do not fear going forward slowly, fear only to stand still."

"...and then the fight started." What not to say to your wife!

- My wife sat down next to me as I was flipping channels. She asked "What's on TV?" I said "Dust". And then the fight started.....
- My wife was hinting about what she wanted for our upcoming anniversary. She said "I want something shiny that goes from 0 to about 150 in about 3 seconds". I bought her a bathroom scale! And then the fight started.....

SPACE A FLIGHTS:

There have been very few Space A flights this quarter due to the deployment, however, there should be more opportunities and options in the coming months. I ask that anyone who has taken advantage of this benefit, or any other benefit, to let us know at the office, and we can publish their adventures for the rest of us to enjoy and learn. In the upcoming months, there may be possibilities of missions to Pope AFB, NC; Key West, FL or St. Pete, FL There is a DoD policy that passenger terminals are not allowed to advertise flights more than 72 hours before. If you plan on taking a trip, be ready to go. This may be the last chance you have to fly in a C-130 from Niagara. Reservations usually can be made at the destination lodging with little or no problem. The rest is easy. Also, sign up on Facebook, TAKE A HOP.com or at the terminal in building 801, near the BX on base. If interested in flying from another base, go to "passenger terminal_(name of the base)_" and it will tell you the next 72 hours of arrivals and departures for that base. For

assistance, please contact the RAO at (716) 236-2389 (please note we are unable to provide flight information via phone).

100% Disabled Veterans

As it stands now, 100% disabled veterans, not retired, are not authorized Space A travel. As per AMC HQ, regarding H.R. 4435 Amendment 15, stating that 100% disabled veterans can fly Space A, no guidance has been passed down to terminals to allow this. Until DoD issues guidance including any changes into DoD's Transportation Regulation (DoD4515.13R), 100% disabled veterans remain ineligible for Space A. Again, ask your elected officials to help. The key to authorization would be the possession of the BLUE ID card (Retired). As of this date, surviving spouses are not eligible, nor are they included in this proposal.

HOLIDAY SEASON:

The holidays are soon approaching. Whatever your religious beliefs are, practice them. This is a good time to reflect over the past year. Some of our loved ones are sick and some are gone. They have hopefully left a great legacy for you. Try not to overindulge, but enjoy your friends and family. You are very precious to them. To those who have served, again, welcome home. Your fathers, mothers, sons and daughters were concerned about you while you were away. It was also a stressful time for them as well. Let us all regain our faith in each other. Family Readiness has programs that we should all enjoy. I wish you a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year. Most of all, a great Veterans' Day! Thank you for your service to our country.

If anyone would like to volunteer at the Family Readiness Center, please give them a call. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated. Call Joel or Holly or any of the great people there at 236-2097/3214.

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. Reeley (1SG USA Retired) - Director/Editor
 914th AIRLIFT WING/CVR
 2720 KIRKBRIDGE DRIVE
 NIAGARA FALLS, NY 14304-5001

**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

