

December 2009

VSPA PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Our 15th Annual Reunion in Phoenix, AZ had about 170 members and guests who attended. The weather was great, the food was good and there were plenty of drinks and snacks for the Hospitality Room. Our tour at Luke AFB was one of the best I have attended in five reunions. Major Michael J. Borders, Commander of the 56th Security Forces Squadron committed at least fifty of the security forces men and women to the various demonstrations we saw. Big difference in this unit that I noticed was that everyone participated in the physical exercise: officers, senior NCOs, NCOs and all the troops, men and women doing the same exact exercises. The exercises are set up so the same types of strength and skill as used in combat are used in their exercise programs, relay teams running carrying a litter patient, running with full ammo cans etceteras. Very impressive because they work as a team and are led by example.

At the Board Meeting of the VSPA Officers, Van Digby tendered his resignation as the BX Manager, effective 1 July 2010, to give us time to find a replacement. His wife Joyce accompanied him. Both Van and Joyce, along with their daughter Kari, have managed the BX for over seven years and nurtured it from an inventory of about \$2,500 to an inventory of about \$25,000. They fill anywhere from 20-30 orders a week to as high as 40-50 orders during peak times. Each order according to Van and Joyce takes about an hour and a half to fill. That's from when they receive an order, filling it, wrapping it and mailing it. Then there is the administrative side such as managing the PayPal account, ordering new merchandise from vendors and doing the physical inventory. At the reunions when others are enjoying some quiet time or enjoying the Hospitality Room, Van and Joyce were working in the BX for our benefit. We owe them a debt of gratitude that can never be paid. We are very fortunate to have had Van, Joyce and Kari provide such great service over the last seven years. The Digby family exemplifies the type of dedication to the members of the VSPA that makes the VSPA a great association.

The BX is no longer a small operation and it has become a very time consuming small business operation which has to be treated as a business. One in which the primary goal is to provide merchandise to our members at the lowest possible price for the highest quality goods. It is apparent that the VSPA was fortunate in having a family like the Digbys devote the space in their home for the merchandise, have three adults who assisted in the operation of the BX and provide the tireless effort they put forth. I did not seriously consider asking for another volunteer to devote that much time out of their life. This is a full time job at a time when most of us are retired or looking forward to retirement.

Don and Larry Poss are already heavily involved with the VSPA in providing us with web services and also operate an on-line store that sells military memorabilia. Both Don and Larry donated several large flags and banners for our reunion this year along with numerous other items worth in excess of \$1,500. I asked if either of them would be interested in managing the VSPA BX. Both initially declined to be managers. After two potential deals to locate a manager failed, Larry agreed to take on our BX as a contract manager for one year at a time, with extensions up to five years if both parties agree. The basics of the agreement are that the VSPA retains ownership of the current inventory. The prices for merchandise, the quality of merchandise and the time to process orders will be about the same as current orders. There may be some initial slowdown during the Christmas Holidays but the BX will continue to receive orders on PayPal and those mailed to the Digbys will be forwarded to Larry Poss. The profits will be 80% to Larry Poss and 20% to the VSPA. What is considered profit is what funds remain after holding back money for replacing the merchandise and payment of business expenses. This will be an on-line store. Debt-ability can be ascertained on a monthly basis or even a daily basis if needed since the business transactions are computerized. Larry will assume operation of the BX effective January 1, 2010.

I believe, as does your board, that this is our best opportunity to make the BX a viable business. Our primary motive is not to make money but to continue to provide the best quality of merchandise for the best price to our members. Any earnings can go into the scholarship fund or to fund the challenge coins we give away each year to the Security Forces personnel who support our reunion visit to their base. Larry is a business man experienced in this type of business; he believes he can make a profit without increasing merchandise cost and most of all he is already a crucial benefactor to the VSPA. There is a trust factor here that we would not share with someone who has not previously shown a high level of dedication to the VSPA.

The accountants and attorney hired to file tax returns for the VSPA have all the requested information in their possession. We are current on our reporting obligations to the State of Texas.

The guest speaker for our 2010 reunion in San Antonio will be Local (ret) Robert Sullivan. On 1 August 1966, then Cpt Sullivan led our convoy of 52 SPs, some Red Horse construction troops, a couple of cooks and one medic into Phù Cát Valley. When we arrived at the location (couldn't even call it a camp much less a base) we threw our belongings out the back of the trucks onto the ground. Bulldozers started grading away the prickly pear cactus patches so the Red Horse guys could pitch our tents while we scouted out guard positions and dug foxholes. Capt. Sullivan will have something of interest to say to everyone. He was the first SP Commander at Phù Cát and he treated us great. He welcomed the 1041st (Test) which were the first Safeside troops to Phù Cát in

Jan 67. And he toured the US with Nemo and was later assigned to Wash DC to work on the Military War Dog Program.

As part of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) the SFS units at Lackland (the 37th) and Randolph (the 12) which were formerly at Phù Cát are being deactivated in 2010. The future presence or configuration of SFS troops at Lackland is not known at this time. I have been in contact with LTC Schneider, the current CO of the 37th SFS and he will keep us apprised of developments as they occur which might impact on our reunion. Anyone desiring information on the status of the VSPA reunion visit to Lackland, contact Steve Gattis, Hector Ramos, or myself. Please do not contact the SFS unit for information. The members of Cobra Flight from Phù Cát have a reunion scheduled in the Spring of 2010 and we do not want to cause any confusion as the SFS will have their hands full with the deactivation.

Our reunion site in 2011 will be in Dayton, Ohio.

**Respectfully,
Newell Swartz, President (2009)**

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