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# NAA&NV NEWS

September 2017

3rd QUARTER

Members Publication of the National Association of Atomic & Nuclear Veterans

## FROM THE DESK OF THE COMMANDER

Sept 22 2017

We have just returned from our 60 days Vacation in Alaska. We drove over 7,000 miles with our pickup and travel trailer. We visited with Terry Brady our NAAV State commander for Alaska WE missed the B.C. fires but had to make a big sweep to the east to avoid them. We have rested for about 2 weeks and now off to Branson for Convention. We are renting a car and driving 4,000 miles round trip.

We have several bills introduced in federal and state Committee's this year. This one we got passed here in Oregon we have a bill in committee to make a section of I-5 Atomic Veterans Highway, approximately 20 miles long from Salem to Albany Oregon. This goes into effect Jan 1, 2018

I am very proud of our State Commanders and each member for their efforts.

We have gotten our tax-exempt status reinstated after several attempts, so all donations are tax deductible.

Convention 2017. We are back from Convention in Branson, MO. We had a great time. Alan Owen the director of the British Nuclear Veterans was one of our guest speakers. What a lovely time and program he presented. They have basically the same problems that we are having. Alan Owen has stated that we need to join forces and get other countries to join with us to get recognition for us all Eldon Alik was our next guest speaker and he was from Arkansas for the Marshall Islanders. We will all be working together for the same causes.

Talked about where next year's convention will be and I have asked for the west Coast, Portland in general in Sept 2018.



Eldon Alik - Fred Schafer - Alan Owen

Fred Schafer  
NAA&NV  
National  
Commander

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### Change of Address, Membership or Renewal... Write or E-Mail

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Deadlines are the 1st of every 3rd month and any material submitted after that time may be delayed until next issue. All submissions are to be e-mailed to bobrauyle34@gmail.com or mailed to Robert L. Ruyle-420 Steinway Road-Lincoln, NE 68505-2564. All photos must be sent in JPEG format preferably at 300dpi or mail us an original and we will copy it and get it back to you.

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## OPERATION RANGER



Throughout its history units from the Second Armored Division have undertaken many unusual missions. One such mission involved...

“Charlie Company” 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion. This particular mission has seldom if ever been publicized.

In January 1951, Division Headquarters ordered Charlie Company to pack all its gear and stand by for orders. Everything was to be handled hush, hush! The next afternoon we loaded the entire company, including vehicles on a train. Since we were headed west, we all thought that the Army was sending the entire company to Korea. There was no official word where we were going. Just a lot of rumors. As I said earlier, since the train was headed west, almost everyone figured we were on our way to Camp Stoneman in California for shipment to the Far East.

As the train approached Barstow, California, the platoon leaders finally got their troops together and told them we were going to Frenchman Flat near Las Vegas to participate in Operation Ranger, a series of Atomic Bomb Tests.

Once we arrived in Las Vegas, we unloaded and were driven to an old gunnery range a few miles from Nellis Air Force Base. We set up squad tents and put together a shift kitchen in an old aluminum shack on the grounds of the old gunnery range. At first there was no running water and we had to dig latrines. Later arrangements were made to bring in drinking water by truck each day from Nellis.

The living conditions were horrible. It was hotter than the binges on the gates of Hell. Those GI's in the company that did not have a specific duty assignment during the day, just sat around and roasted in the hot sun. In contrast, the fly boys at Nellis had it pretty good. The base had a cafeteria which served food 24-hours a day. When not on duty, the fly boys had all types of recreational facilities including a horseshoe pit, a basketball court, and numerous ping pong tables. For recreation, the guys in Charlie Company would go around throwing rocks at the lizards and snakes that shared our tents.

While waiting for specific orders, Captain Booth our CO decided to let half of the company go into Vegas for a night on the town. I was in the half that didn't get to go into town. The group that did go into town got into a big fight with some

civilians. The troopers from the 82nd, tore up a night club and the civilians called the police. (Young GI's and liquor don't mix). Because of the fight, Captain Booth did not allow the second half of the company to go into Vegas. (Ah shucks!)

Before the actual test started. Captain Booth gave us some information about our role in Operation Ranger. We were to provide security at two runways that had been set aside for two B-50D bombers at the airbase. All the Atomic bombs were to be dropped by the bombers and exploded in the open air over the Frenchman Flat area. The tests carried out under Operation Ranger would be the first in the United States proper since the Trinity tests in 1945. Our assignment - was top secret and we were not to discuss our duties with anyone, especially civilians that might try to contact us. Several of us in the company wondered why the Air Police from Nellis did not provide security. Perhaps, they were too busy finishing their ping pong tournament.

Captain Booth ordered that every Charlie Company-man assigned for duty on the air strips carry live ammunition with a round in the chamber ready for firing. Any unauthorized individual approaching the bombers was to be challenged. The Captain went on to add that if an individual made any sudden moves toward the aircraft, that individual should be shot. A major concern for the Army Brass was that some “crack pots” would try and sneak onto the flight line and tamper with the aircraft. The brass also had a concern that some nut would try and get close enough to take photos of the special equipment on board the aircraft.

One morning it was bitter cold. As I walked my guard post, I could feel the cold winds penetrate the very marrow of my bones. Man I was cold! Suddenly, I saw a shadowy figure approaching. I hollered for the individual to halt but he kept coming. I raised my M-1 and got ready to fire. When the shadowy figure got within 50 yards, he finally halted. I could see he was an Air Force GI. For a second he just stood there. Then he held up a steaming pot of coffee that he was carrying, “My mess sergeant thought you might like a cup of coffee,” he hollered out. I called back to the airman to leave the coffee pot on the hood of a jeep that was parked nearby. “Thank the Mess Sergeant, I'll have a cup in a few minutes when I finish my tour of duty.” The airman placed the coffee pot down and seconds later he was gone. That airman never knew how close he came to getting shot. Would I have shot him? Probably, I

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## MINUTES OF 2017 NAAV BOARD MEETING (CONTINUED)

Fred presented the Treasurers Report on behalf of Frank Farmer, Treasurer, who is excused.

As of September 1, 2017

Checking account \$17,415.80

Savings account \$14,262.13

Regarding next years convention: Fred requested Portland, Oregon as next site. Other suggestions included Portland Convention Center, Tigard American Legion, Spokane, Chehalis, Shilo Inns.

Eldon Alik presented a brief program on Marshall Islands. He is Counsel General for the Marshallese in Arkansas. More than 15,000 Marshallese live in Arkansas. He began his post as Ambassador 2 months ago.

The Marshall Islands people, due to atomic testing on their homeland, have suffered radiation exposure, leukemia, as well as thyroid, stomach and colon cancer. In fact, the people of the Marshall Islands along with Atomic Veterans carry the highest rates of illness and death from radiation causes. The ambassador stated that although the health issues have been catastrophic, it is the complete loss of culture and tradition which has most impacted the islanders. They have lost a cultural heritage of thousands of years. They have lost traditions, customs and skills. Currently most live in need of social services, healthcare, basic rights and privileges that would allow them to learn new skills and create better lives for themselves and their families now legal residents within the United States. They have become a displaced people.

The ambassador thanked N.A.A.V. for its support that has helped the Oregon Legislature to unanimously approve Medicaid for people of the Marshall Islands who reside in Oregon. Prior to that initial step, the Marshallese people had been denied health insurance for 20 years although they were already legal citizens of the United States. He concluded by saying, “We will require your full continuing support. You will have our full support for continuing cooperation between our organizations.”

After a brief break, meeting was resumed at 10:55 a.m.

Members cooperated to ride shared from hotel to Springfield airport Friday morning. Veterans stood to introduce themselves and tell about their own experience in service.

Recess for lunch

After lunch, Vic Skaar presented information regarding radiation exposure. He discussed how he went to the Freedom of Information Act to get background information regarding his exposure to radiation while in the service. A DD-214 is not enough. You can use witnesses who were with you to verify likely exposure. If you had a particular occupation which was demonstrably within likely exposure incidence, take that documentation.

You need proof that you were in certain exposed area at particular time. He discussed methods of research he employed to prove his case. He talked about NOT giving up. Appeal. The final level is the court of veterans appeals.

Keith Kiefer presented a legislative update. Keith has been asked to give testimony for some veteran compensation legislation.

Regarding RECA, Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, Keith was consulted and did make some recommendations. One bill includes Eniwetok Atoll, recognized for the first time. Atomic Veterans Service Medal has 8 co-sponsors. Has been put into National Defense Appropriations Act of 2017, at a roll call vote, 435 voted favorably and so it has passed the House. Now it will be introduced into the Senate. Atomic Veterans Day. No offer on that bill to date. In the Minnesota Senate, the bill passed the senate but did not pass the house. Meanwhile, the Minnesota Governor passed a resolution to have July 16 Atomic Veterans Day, but that is not continuous.

Senate Resolution 25 designating a day of remembrance for “Downwinders.”

Operation Stand Together occurred in Washington, D.C. Keith spoke at that event. Erin Brockovich also attended that event. Toxic veterans from several categories of exposure to hazardous situations were represented.

Meeting Adjourned 2:40 p.m. (Submitted by Barbara Schafer, NAAV Secretary)

## MINUTES OF 2017 NAAV BOARD MEETING

N.A.A.V. Convention 2017 September 13, 2017

Board Meeting

Board members present: Bob Pfeifer, Keith Kiefer, Haskell Watts, Robert Ruyle, Fred Schafer, Barb Schafer

Excused: Gillie Jenkins, Lincoln Grahls, Frank Farmer

National Commander, Fred Schafer, opened the board meeting at 7:10 p.m. with Pledge of Allegiance. Board members were introduced and recognized. Fred thanked the members and board members in attendance for their participation in this meeting.

Fred introduced Alan Owens, Chairman of British Nuclear Veterans, from England. Cham Meredith will play fiddle at the banquet on September 15. The ambassador for the Marshallese will be in attendance at the convention.

Alan will present a power point informational program about British Atomic Veterans.

Eldon Alik, the Marshall Islands Ambassador from Arkansas will also make a presentation at the convention.

Fred announced that Oregon has dedicated 20 miles of I-5 Freeway as the "Atomic Veterans Highway" Signage will be completed January 1, 2018.

The general meeting will be at 9:00a.m. There have been 37 members and spouses attendant at this meeting. The banquet will be informal dress. At 7:25 p.m. the meeting was adjourned until 9:00 a.m. Friday.

For the good of the order, the NAAV flag was on display and was discussed. Meeting will be called to order 9:00 A.M. Friday Morning.

September 15, 2017 N.A.A.V. Annual Convention General Meeting 9:00 a.m. Fred Schafer, National Commander, opened the General meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Two guests were introduced:

Alan Owen, British Chairman for Atomic Veterans

Eldon Alik, Marshall Islands Ambassador for Arkansas

Board members present: Keith Kiefer, Bob Pfeiffer, Robert Ruyle, Haskell Watts, Fred Schafer, Barb Schafer

Board Members excused: Frank Farmer, Gillie Jenkins, Lincoln Grahls

Sick Call: Judy Farmer, Joan Grahls, Betty Jenkins and Bernice Ruyle.

Welcome to 2017 convention. Announced the Atomic Veterans Highway in Oregon will include 20 miles of Interstate Highway I-5 between Salem and Albany. The legislation also includes the Nuclear Veterans Highway 97 to Hanford Nuclear Waste Storage site. Those signs will be posted by January 2018. Oregon is the third state to have highways designated to Atomic and/or Nuclear Veterans. Kansas and Georgia have previously achieved those goals.

Fred requested that state commanders work toward three goals:

1. Work for veterans to be awarded the Atomic Veterans medal
2. Help to create an National Atomic Veterans Day
3. Strive to have state legislators create a section of highway dedicated to Atomic Veterans in every state.

Fred announced that South Carolina now has an Atomic Veterans memorial.

Old business:

Fred announced that N.A.A.V. Federal tax exempt status has been renewed with the I.R.S. We continue as a 501(c)3 organization.

New Business:

Keith Kiefer talked about Radiated Veterans of America, RVA. He shared copies of his information. RVA is a 501(c)19 organization which is able to lobby congress. Members are currently in process of reinstating their non-profit status. Radiated Veterans of America, RVA has 4 officers. Has 35 members who are mostly NAAV members as well. No assets and no liabilities. In good standing with the state. They have lost non profit status because failure to file 990. There was information and discussion following.

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## OPERATION RANGER (CONTINUED)

had my orders and I had been taught to follow orders.

A few days passed and Captain Booth called the company together again for another briefing. He told us that Operation Ranger would involve several days in which nuclear bombs would be dropped from one of the B-50D bombers we had been guarding. The bombing runs had been designed to drop the bombs in the open air over Frenchman Flat. The actual bomb site was to be about 65 miles from Vegas. During the test, two bombers would take off but only one aircraft had an armed nuclear device on board. We were told that the second aircraft was a decoy but actually I think it was used to film and document the bombing. As far as precautions, we were told nothing except not to face the blast. Moreover, we were told nothing about seeking cover in a trench or ditch.

The military and civilian brass running the tests considered the first bomb dropped on January 27, 1951, a rather small device. It weighed only 5 kilotons. The bomb dropped the next day was slightly bigger (8 kilotons). Then the brass switched again and went back to the smaller device. On the fourth day the brass switched again to the 8 kiloton bomb. On the scheduled day of the fifth bomb.

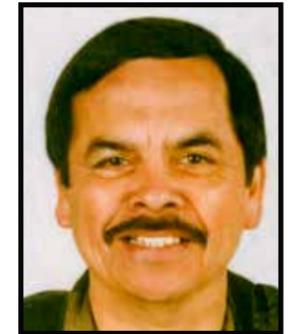
I was going- through the chow line. It was as dark as the bottom of the ocean. Suddenly, there was a flash, and the dark morning sky lit up. The dark sky turned to daylight. The flash of light seemed brighter than the sun. The fifth bomb was 22 kilotons and I later read that the explosion could be felt all the way in Los Angeles. (By comparison, the bomb dropped on Nagasaki during World War II also produced a 22 kiloton blast). The ground shook and this was followed by a rumbling noise that overwhelmed most of us. The aluminum shack that served as the company kitchen shook violently. The explosion itself was ugly but the sight of the ugly mushroom rising high into the sky made everyone uneasy. It felt like we were getting a peek of Hell. Most of the troopers felt utter terror.

The next day parts of the ground turned to ice. The temperature dropped. It became extremely cold and very uncomfortable. One day we were roasting in the Nevada sun, the next day we were freezing our tails off.

A few days later the company received orders to pack our gear for the return trip to Fort Hood. When we returned to Texas,

none of the guys said too much. Everything was still hush, hush! A couple of months after we returned from Operation Ranger the entire Division was shipped off to Germany. I shipped out to Germany with the 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion but soon volunteered for duty in Korea. Not long after, I joined the 38th Infantry Regiment of Second Infantry Division in Korea.

I lost touch with all but one former member of Charlie Company, so I don't know what effect the atomic tests had on the subsequent lives of my former buddies. Years later I managed to contact the wife of my best Charlie Company buddy. She told me that he died of cancer in 2006 as a direct result of his involvement in Operation Ranger in 1951. That got me to wondering whatever happened to the other troopers of the 82th?



(Submitted by Rodolfo Leyva, PhD)

## LOOKING FOR A SHIPMATE

Anyone that was aboard the USS Independence CVL-22 from April 1948 to August 1949 would you please contact Gillie Jenkins our Director of State Commanders at 804-334-8585 or e-mail him at [atomicgillie@verizon.net](mailto:atomicgillie@verizon.net).

## NOTE

Robert Ruyle has replaced Barbara Schafer as the Secretary of NAAV so that all are NAAV veterans and board members. Will continue to publish your newsletter as well as being Secretary of the NAAV group.

## SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Many of you have seen pictures of Fred our National Commander in parades over the past years, but how many of you participate in parades? Ken Swain from South Carolina does and I am sure many of you have. But here is something you might think about doing.



Left-to-Right: Kenneth Swain - Cathy Holt - Wilson Cain  
Cathy holding Sun Fun Sandy



Kenneth Swain - beside new Monument - Myrtle Beach, SC

Ken doesn't just participate in the annual parades. Ken thought he needed to go a step farther and have a monument put in the military park there at Myrtle Beach. He approached the park committee and got approval then had this monument made and installed.

Ken then went on to have an unveiling ceremony at the park attended by members of the NAAV as well as local and state representatives of the South Carolina government. I know he has inspired me to approach getting a monument set aside in our Veterans Park here in Lincoln, NE. Thanks for your efforts Ken and I hope this might inspire others to do the same.

This should inspire all State Commanders to begin working with the State Government to adopt the 16th of July as a day of honor and remembrance of the 1st atomic bomb explosion in the desert of New Mexico as the Federal Government did back in President Ronald Reagan's time. Unfortunately the Proclamation 5072, signed by President Ronald Reagan in 1983 to make July 16th National Atomic Veterans' Day did not contain the words (**and each succeeding year**) and after a few years many states dropped it. A few have been approached by NAAV members, especially State Commanders and have gotten their local state legislators to pass a bill to make it a yearly event in their state. Some of us have gotten yearly proclamations but we are also trying to get the original proclamation changed to make it an annual, reoccurring event and have been working on it with state congressional members now for some time. We need to all push to get that back on the books as an annual event.

## TAPS

**James Kemp**.....  
Payson, AZ  
**Leon Crawford Jr.** .....  
Terre Haute, IN  
**Robert A. Raymond** .....  
Old Orchard Beach, ME



## ATOMIC U.S. & FRENCH OPERATIONS

I was PCS to Eniwetok Atoll, MI APO187 from late Sept 57 to late Sept 58. I witnessed about 25 A bombs and at least 1 H-bomb named OAK within about 20 miles. I was badged when arriving there but about a week before OAK an H Bomb was fired at Bikini and was visible on our CPS9 weather radar at 350 miles ENE of Fred on Eniwetok. Could not measure cloud height as our beam width was 2 degrees but the upper layers were moving in our direction.

My commander an AF Captain Ragland collected all of our badges and placed them in the unit safe. We were unbadged for the rest of Hardtack. There were about 19 weather men there. Only I remain alive.

Oak was detonated and the same thing happened. The upper layers were swept westward. Our weather balloons were only capable of a little over 100,000 feet with an occasional 2 millibars which in about 150K and all showed wind flow toward the ENE. With the CPS9 weather radar we estimated a height close to 200K feet of the mushroom. We got fallout from OAK, which was visible to the eye.

Most of that info was declassified with an estimated 75k top of the mushroom cloud. The planes used to measure those cloud tops were 10 engine B36s. 6 pusher prop and 4 jets. No way they could go higher than 75K and we did not have satellite data back then.

I was also at Palmyra Island 1962 about 960 miles South of Honolulu for Dominic. We got little or no fallout there.

In 1966 I was given a red cover passport and had all military ID taken away. I and about 6 others from 6WS Mobile at Tinker AFB were taken to Panama where we were officially on TOD for an unknown mission. We landed at Howard AFB, Panama and bused to Rodman Navy Station and placed on an MSTs ship which took us to Chile and about 2 days later to Easter Island. We had no idea why we were there until another group of

civilian clothed men arrived. They were French military and were badged. We were not badged. (Hello) We were involved in French military nuclear testing in 1966. That is correct 1966.

There were about 6 or 7 of us from 6WS Mobile, Tinker AFB, OK. I think I am the last one alive of that group too. The French military people were badged and told us there was fallout from Mururoa where the bombs were detonated which was about 800 miles to our West.

On page 8 of the June 2017 2nd quarter of NAA&NV News 1966 is not included. I am OK and may be the only living weather observing person left alive from 1958 Hardtack and 1966 Mururoa testing.

I am retired AF MSGT but do not receive retired pay so am not subject to UCMJ. My military retired reserve status ended in Jan 1987. My receipt of retired military pay ended on 30 June 1996.

(Submitted by Tadd Kowalzyk)

## SHIPS STORE ITEMS

Shown as Q-Store Items on our WebSite  
Will begin showing them a few  
at a time in coming newsletters.

- We have NAAV Jackets in M-L-XL-XXL sizes \$40.00
- NAAV Hats at \$15.00
- NAAV T-shirts (short or long sleeve) M-L-XL-XXL and they are available in Army Green, Navy Blue, Marine Red and USAF Blue for \$28.00
- Auto Decals 4x6 -- \$10.00, 2.4 -- \$6.00 and 2x3--\$5.00
- Windshield Stickers -- \$10.00
- 4" Jacket Patches -- \$10.00
- 1" Label Pins -- \$10.00
- 4 each Coasters -- \$25.00
- 9" Mouse Pad -- \$15.00
- License Plate -- \$25.00



Jacket Patch

All items are available by sending in your order to NAAV, INC. 130 Cleveland Street, Lebanon, OR 97355  
Please include the size of any shirt or jacket you order.  
All prices include Shipping & Postage Fees.