



## 1st Infantry Division Artillery Association Newsletter #2-24

August 2024

*"A battery of Field Artillery is worth a thousand muskets" - William Tecumseh Sherman*

### **Association Officers and Contact Information:**

President:	JP Richard	email: <a href="mailto:jprichard47@gmail.com">jprichard47@gmail.com</a>
Vice President:	Chuck Masters	(pending acceptance)
Sec'y/Treasurer:	Tom Weber	email: <a href="mailto:twebersr@bellsouth.net">twebersr@bellsouth.net</a>
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Chaplain	Jose Ruiz	email: <a href="mailto:jcralberto@gmail.com">jcralberto@gmail.com</a>

For information on the organization please contact any of the officers and for information on joining please contact Tom Weber. Cost to join is \$20 for lifetime membership.

**Greetings Fellow Redlegs:** We have recently returned home from the 103<sup>rd</sup> Annual Society of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division Reunion in Albuquerque, NM (31 July - 4 August) and there is much to report. For those who were unable to make it there, we missed you. For those who were there, we hope you made it home safely. We hope all will make an effort to make it to the **next reunion at the Marriott Oak Brook, Oak Brook, IL (18 – 22 June 2025)**. Oak Brook is on the west side of Chicago, a little closer in than where we previously stayed in Lombard in 2015 & 2018. If you have not visited the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division Museum before, this will be a wonderful opportunity to see it and be treated by the McCormick Foundation to a great time/reunion.

The Artillery had 19 current and former Division Artillery members signed up in the CP and we think there may have been some additional “Redlegs” who missed the signup register or didn’t make it to the CP. We did acquire five new members for the 1<sup>st</sup> Division Artillery Association. Our new members are:

Manuel Alzaga, Jr.	C/3/6 Arty 1981-83
Gerald L. McLaughlin	2/33 Arty 1968-69
Maurice (Moe) Pelletier	DIVARTY & 3/6 Arty 1981-85
Shane Canfield	HHB 3/6 Arty 1979-81
Ron Gordon	

In addition to all the “Redlegs” we welcomed several family members to the Artillery family at the reunion.

**Departure of Our Executive Director:** Sadly we must report that we are losing our great Executive Director, Phyllis Fitzgerald. Phyllis has been our Director for the past four+ years. She will be moving to Tennessee to be close to family; however, she plans to stay on in an advisory role for at least the next year. She will be sorely missed.

**Welcome Our New Director:** The Board of Directors has selected *Josh Sandlin* to be our new Executive Director. Josh is retiring from the Army as a Master Sergeant with twenty-two years of service. Nineteen of those 22 years have been with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. Most recently he served as 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant of HHB and A Battery of the 1/7 Artillery. Josh had three combat tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. All four combat tours were with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. Josh is married with two children, a daughter age 18 and a son age 15. He plans to live in Junction City. Josh feels one of his greatest strengths is communications so he wants to hear from and respond to the Society membership. Josh assumes his duties as the new Executive Director on 15 August 2024. You can reach Josh on his personal Cell # 785-477-3065 or personal email at [joshua.sandlin@yahoo.com](mailto:joshua.sandlin@yahoo.com), or you can use the normal S1ID contact phone numbers/email addresses.



**Welcome Reception:** The welcome reception was a great success this year with a free buffet and open bar courtesy of the McCormick Foundation. There was spirited bidding for several items in the open auction and additional items in the silent auction. JP's contribution of a 1<sup>st</sup> Division lazysusan with all the unit crests brought in a bid of \$100.

One of the highlights, as always, was having Phyllis leading the "Train Dance". She probably had fifty people in the "train" this year and they all had a great time following our retiring executive director.

**Super Dancers:** Another fun part of the Annual Reception is being able to watch our own Mike Pavese and his partner, Kathy Spencer, dancing like a couple of pros. Mike served in RVN with the 1/7<sup>th</sup> and 6/15<sup>th</sup> Battalions. Mike started attending the Society Reunions in 1991 in San Jose and has only missed very few since that time. He recalled that in 1992 in Chicago was the first time the 1/5 Arty organized the Artillery vets into their own CP's. When asked about her golf skills, Kathy shared that she doesn't hold Mike back when they are playing together. 😊



**Notes from the Annual Artillery Meeting:** The annual meeting was held at 0930 hrs on Friday, 2 August 2024. Unfortunately due to scheduling conflicts with tours, etc. we only had twelve members who were able to attend the annual meeting. Following the opening prayer and Pledge of Allegiance updates were given on the status of members not in attendance. Vito Giobbie had a neck operation recently and is in a cast from the chest up. Val Johnson is on oxygen and is concerned about flying; Mack Easley's health has improved somewhat but he is not able to travel. John Knagenhelm is recovering from two abdominal surgeries, John Lundin and MG Robles both passed away on 4 July 2024.

\* On election of officers it was noted that Val Johnson requested that he would like to be removed as Vice President. JP suggested that we consider replacing Val with Chuck Masters subject to Chuck's approval. JP also requested that we add the position of Chaplain to our slate of officers and that Jose Ruiz be considered for that position. A motion was made and carried to reelect the current slate of officers with those changes: President - JP Richard, Vice President – Chuck Masters (tentative), Secretary/Treasurer – Tom Weber, S-3 – Frank Alexander and Chaplain – Jose Ruiz.

\* Tom Weber presented the minutes from last year and gave a financial report. The financial report showed an income of \$490 and expenditures of \$500 leaving a balance of \$2944.10. Both reports were approved.

\* JP gave a report on the very successful Artillery reunion held at Fort Sill this past April. He indicated we may consider having another Artillery reunion there in 2026.

\* JP gave an update on the plaque honoring SGM Ira Whitaker to be placed with the M109 Howitzer on display at the Fort Sill Artillery Museum. JP has the new plaque and is working with the FA Museum at Fort Sill to have the plaque approved for mounting at the M109 display.

*Tom Weber shared that JP had borne the cost of the new plaque from his personal finances and that he thought we should make an effort to reimburse JP in accordance with our approved motion from last year. A new motion was made and accepted to pay JP for the approximately \$1000 he has invested in this project from Association funds, and then request members to provide Tom Weber with their donations to restore the Association treasury. An immediate \$340 was collected for this purpose from those attending. **All members are now asked to contribute to this project by sending your contribution to Tom Weber.** Tom's address is: 8627 Goodbys Trace Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32217.*

**Artillery Guidon Update:** Following the Albuquerque reunion Frank Alexander turned the maintenance of the Artillery Guidons over to JP. The current set of guidons were originally acquired and donated to the Artillery Association by Col (Ret) John Seitz at Fort Riley. They included the traditional organic 1<sup>st</sup> Division Artillery battalions that served the Division in Viet Nam and before. Frank has cared for the guidons for the last 10 years and he built the display frame prior to the Gettysburg Artillery Reunion in 2015. The guidons have been the focus of our reunion group pictures ever since that reunion.

This year, with the arrival of several new members to the Artillery Association the new guys wanted to know - "where were the guidons for the 1<sup>st</sup> Division Artillery units they served with?" With that in mind JP has already taken action to acquire three new guidons for our display. He will soon have guidons representing the **2/5<sup>th</sup> Artillery, the 4/5<sup>th</sup> Artillery and the 3/6<sup>th</sup> Artillery.** JP also has plans to upgrade our display frame to accommodate the additional guidons for future reunions. If anyone has additional input on this topic, please contact JP and provide him with your information.



## A Gift for the Society President from the Artillery:

On the first day of the Albuquerque Reunion we invited Gen Watts to the Artillery CP for a unique presentation. JP presented him with a special personalized walking stick crafted by JP. The walking stick is made from Bois d'Arc wood, which is the second hardest wood found in the US. It featured 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division symbols and the back side had “eyes” so Gen Watts would always know we have our eye on him. JP also presented Gen Watts with a second shorter stick, called a “Thumper”. The “Thumper” was to go to Mrs Watts for any use she may deem appropriate in the future.



**Notes from the Artillery CP:** This year the theme for the reunion was:

*“Year of Victory - that celebrates the accomplishments of the Officers, NCOs and Soldiers who have served in the Big Red One”*

While we didn't make a three-peat on winning the best decorated CP representing the reunion theme, we felt we were in the running again. In addition to displaying pictures of the Artillery equipment used to support Division victories, we provided displays honoring all the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division Medal of Honor recipients from WWI, WWII, Viet Nam and the Global War on Terror. We had many visitors to the CP from other units and some brought interesting insights and stories worth sharing.

***Jeffrey Kramer – B/1/4 Cav*** – Jeff wandered in on the first day of the reunion and after a short discussion we discovered that he had been on the perimeter of FSB Rita when we got hit on 1 Nov 1968 in Operation Fishhook in RVN. Jeff had indicated he had attended a number of reunions before and never run into anyone who had been at FSB Rita. He said he was beginning to wonder if it ever really happened. We reassured him that it did happen and provided him with one of the Rita maps used to support the MOH award for LTC Charlie Rogers.



Jeff & Frank at Artillery Display on FSB Rita

Jeff shared one of the best “war stories” we can recall: it seems that when his troop departed FSB Rita, the first night they stayed overnight at a Special Forces camp. When the troopers began to set up their defensive positions, the SF guys informed them that wasn't necessary because they didn't need to worry about getting hit. When asked how the SF guys could be so sure, they said they put out two cases of beer at a certain location at night and the next morning there would be a note telling them where all the new land mines were located. Great story !!

***John Durham*** – At the same time we were talking with Jeff Kramer, in came John Durham for a visit. There were a lot of distractions but fortunately one of our wife attendees,

Sharon Alexander, picked up on John saying his brother had been awarded the Medal of Honor and she directed him to our display of the MOH Awards from Viet Nam.

Not only was Harold “Pinky” Durham a MOH awardee but he was an Artilleryman who was serving as a Forward Observer with Company D, 2/28<sup>th</sup> Infantry at the time his bravery led to the award of the MOH. We are so glad that John and his wife stopped in the Artillery CP and we were able to have him see how we honored his brother “Pinky”.

Incidentally, quite by accident, during a later visit to the Artillery CP, John and his wife learned that they are practically close neighbors with the Alexanders down in Texas. Great things happen when we just sit and talk with other folks at the Society Reunions.



John Durham Pointing to the MOH Citation for his Brother, 2LT Harold B. (Pinky) Durham, Jr.

*SFC Juan Santiago – 2<sup>nd</sup> Inf Regiment & 1<sup>st</sup> Avn Bde (RVN Service 1965-1970) – SFC Santiago visited the Artillery CP with his wife, Carmen Nizzi, on Saturday to thank JP for the use of his wheelchair. Interestingly, JP had brought the wheelchair for another “Redleg” who didn’t need it and it turned out to be a real Godsend for Juan.*



*While he was visiting the Artillery CP, Juan shared a number of his personal coins with our members. Our picture shows Juan pointing to our Sam Floca miniatures display. We believe Sam and Juan served together in “Drac” in 1968. While there Juan also shared with us that he had served with, and was good friends with, the first Viet Nam MOH Awardee on our board – SSG James E. Bondsteel.*

### More CP Photos:



## **Notes from the Society General Membership Meeting:**

### **\* Executive Director Comments:**

- The 1<sup>st</sup> Division Memorial in Washington work has been completed and paid for. It was dedicated on Memorial Day weekend. There were 631 names of those 1<sup>st</sup> Division soldiers lost in combat added to the memorial. There were many Gold Star family members who attended the dedication services.

- Phyllis reported that the Society membership currently stands at nearly 9000 and most of those are “lifetime” members. All the statistics are included in the Bridgehead Sentinel magazine. Phyllis asked that we share the digital form of the magazine with others who may not know about the Society.

- Phyllis indicated the Spring raffle of the past few years has done well and plans are to continue holding the raffle as long as one of our corporate sponsors will provide an appropriate prize.

- Plans are underway for the 104<sup>th</sup> Reunion in Oak Brook, IL.

- The Society finances are doing “okay”.

\* **Society Foundation Report:** awarded 15 scholarships with only 72 applicants. The Board has approved the awarding of 20 scholarships for next year. There were only three active duty applicants this year. We hope to see that increase in the future. We will be working to increase the interest in trade school applications in the future also.

\* **Financial Report:** LTG Watts reported for BG (Ret) David Solomon that all our accounts have been audited and are in good shape. The Society currently has \$1.3 million invested, which is an increase of \$106,900 over the previous year.

\* **Membership Report:** Terry Hueser reported that we need to work on gaining members who have served in the last 20-25 years. He shared that he carries a card with Society information that he can give to former 1<sup>st</sup> Division soldiers when he meets them.

\* **Reunions:** BG Dragon discussed how well the new spouses gathering went and will be continued at future reunions. The best spouse’s question was “How to deal with Grumpy?” The Board has approved the location of the southern Washington, DC area for the 2026 reunion. The Board also approved a decision to combine the Command Posts/Hospitality rooms in one large room for the 2026 reunion. We may be looking at Kansas City or Fort Riley for a reunion after 2026.

\* **Active Division Report:** DCMS Noyes (representing MG Rone, CG) gave an update on the current deployments of the Division units in Europe and the Middle East. He indicated the Division was looking forward to going to the National Training Center for extensive training in the future.

\* **First Division Museum at Cantigny:** Kevin West briefed on a number of expansions at the museum and some of the programs planned for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings.

### **\* Comments from LTG (Ret) Watts, Society President:**

- Update on the DC Monument: Thanks to all who made it possible – the 1<sup>st</sup> Division Memorial update is completed and there is no longer any need to ask for additional funding. The overall cost of the project was \$1.062M with the McCormick Foundation covering \$500K of the cost. In addition to adding the 631 names from the post 9/11 era, the project included adding granite plates for future needs if required.

- Society Bourbon Bottle: There have been some legal issues regarding the packaging of the Society Bourbon; however, they have been resolved and Boundary Oak Distillery will continue to produce the product.

- Recruiting: We are moving from the Vietnam era vets to the post 9/11 vets in our membership. 40% of our 9000 members are now from the post 9/11 era. We need to move our leadership positions to reflect this shift as we move forward.

- Board of Directors – a new Board of Directors for the 2024-2027 has been selected. A new Board is elected every three years.

- LTG Watts addressed the loss of Phyllis and that she will remain in an advisory role for the next year. Also he introduced Josh Sandlin as the new Executive Director effective 15 August.

**Annual Memorial Service:** At the annual Memorial Service there were short readings for each of the wars involving the 1<sup>st</sup> Division – WWI, WWII, Vietnam, Gulf War, and Operation Iraqi Freedom / Operation Enduring Freedom. The annual Memorial Service honors all who have made the ultimate sacrifice in their service to our nation and the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. The Division has lost a total of 13,578 in combat operations. The Service concluded with the playing of “Taps”.



### **Annual Reunion Banquet:**

The “Redlegs” occupied a full four tables with our ladies at the closing banquet and enjoyed an uplifting talk from our new Commanding General, MG Rone. MG Rone and Command Sergeant Major Noyes both expressed how enthused they are about today’s 1<sup>st</sup> Division soldiers. It is clear that our Division is in great hands for the immediate future.

On his visit to the Artillery CP on Saturday afternoon, MG Rone made it known that he wanted to meet some of Hamilton’s Own after the banquet that evening. Several of us made sure we obliged his request.



**Artillery Attendees by Artillery Regiment:**



1<sup>st</sup> of the 5<sup>th</sup> Artillery



3<sup>rd</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> Artillery



8<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> Artillery



1<sup>st</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup> Artillery



15<sup>th</sup> Artillery



**Artillery Group Photos from the Annual Reunion:**



**Our Great Ladies**



**The "Redlegs" Ready for the Banquet**