

**Volume 15, Issue 4**

**December 2011**

## Combat Awards

Eleven Airmen received the Distinguished Flying Cross and three airmen received the Air Medal at Moffett Federal Airfield, Calif., Nov. 5, 2011. 129th Rescue Wing Airmen from around the Bay Area heroically performed combat rescue missions in Afghanistan, often under hostile fire, in 2009 and 2010.

Because of these actions they received the Distinguished Flying Cross, a medal awarded to servicemembers who distinguish themselves in support of operations by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight.



## Board Elections - Officers

*March 2012*

An election for the three Board Corporation Officers - President, Vice President, and Secretary-Treasurer - is scheduled for 2012. The AHA Corporation Bylaws proscribes that Officers are elected in even number years (2012) and Directors are elected in odd number years (2013).

The AHA President, John Ruppel, appointed an Election Committee composed of Director CCMSgt Liliana Ramos; Secretary-Treasurer Lt Col Dave Russell; association member at large, Lt Col Jim Rommelfanger; and Newsletter Editor Lynda Fawcett. The committee will be responsible for gathering nominations, distributing, collecting, and counting the ballots. The newly elected Officers will be announced at the Association's annual meeting, the Annual Old Timers Lunch, scheduled for Tuesday, March 13, 2012, at the Castro Valley Loyal Order of Moose Hall, 20835 Rutledge Road, Castro Valley, CA 94546.

Any AHA member in good standing may serve as an Officer. Individuals interested in serving as an Officer should complete the form included in this issue. Return the completed form (or a reasonable facsimile) no later than January 15, 2010, to:

Col. John L. Ruppel, Jr. (Ret.)  
6718 Zerillo Drive  
Riverbank, CA 95367-2122

Nominations must be received by January 6, 2012, to be valid. All nominations will be included on the ballot. Ballots, a self-addressed stamped postcard, will be mailed to all members, with information regarding the Old Timers Luncheon, no later than February 15, 2012. There is no write-in provision. Ballots must be returned no later than March 7, 2012, to be valid. The nominees with the highest number of votes for each office will be declared Officers, and will be announced and begin their two-year term at the Old Timers Luncheon



## Inside This Issue

1	Combat Awards / Board Elections - Officers
2	Prez Sez
2	Blue Chevron Request
3	Outstanding Airmen of the Year - 2011
4	Board Officer Nomination Form
5	DFAS Tax Statements
6	In Memoriam – Chew Ty-ren Yuen
6	In Memoriam – MSgt Thomas C. Engen
7	Combat Bravery – Part 1
8	Dondi's Mercantile Shop / Member Application
9	Final Fly-By
9	Combat Bravery – Part 2
10	Board of Directors / Missing in Action

## The Prez Sez

### *The President's Column*

**COL John L. Ruppel, Jr. (Ret.)**

Colonel Steve Butow formally assumed command of the 129<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing at a September Change of Command Ceremony. The Association, together with several other organizations, provided the traditional cake and refreshments for the Ceremony.

The Newsletter contains the annual Association Officer Election procedures. The nomination period commences December 8<sup>th</sup> and closes January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012. A nomination form is included in the Newsletter. Ballots will be included in the February Newsletter.

The annual Old Timers Luncheon is scheduled for Tuesday March 13, 2012 at the Castro Valley Moose Lodge. Reservation information and directions to the Lodge will be available in the February Newsletter. Please save the date and plan on joining your friends for an enjoyable afternoon.

The Association was informed of the sudden passing of MSGT Tom Engen. An obituary can be found in the Newsletter.

Colonel Butow requested the Association develop a data base of individuals who had served in the 129<sup>th</sup> and been awarded a Silver Star, Bronze Star, Distinguish Flying Cross, or a Purple Heart. Those members with an email address were informed earlier in November and asked to respond. If you have received one of these awards, please let us know, and, if available, we would appreciate receiving a certificate copy.

The Wing conducted a November award Ceremony to present 11 individuals the Distinguish Flying Cross and 3 individuals Air Medals for Afghanistan rescue actions. The awards were presented by Brigadier General Matthew Beevers, the Assistant Adjutant General at the Wing formation. A video of the Ceremony can be found on you tube using the address:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DQgEw6nY\\_U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DQgEw6nY_U)

Lt Colonel Jay Craddock, representing the Association, presented Col Butow four framed panels displaying the names of the individuals who received a Silver Star, Bronze Star, Distinguish Flying Cross, or a Purple Heart. The panels were created by Ms. Lynda Fawcett. The panels were created allowing the addition of names. The Board intends establishing a web page section which will display the panels.

The Board extends holiday greetings to you and yours and wishes you a successful and prosperous 2012.

*John*

## Blue Chevron Request

### *Moffet Museum*

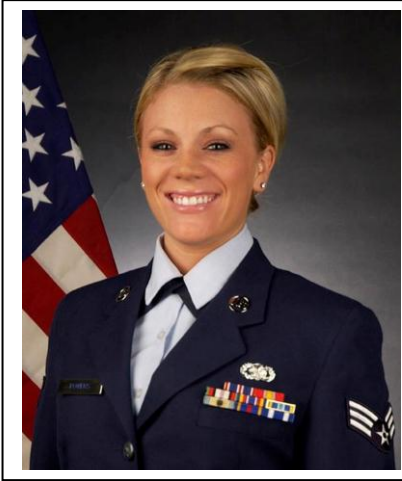
**CCMS Lilliana Ramos (Ret.)**

The Moffett Museum has been asking us to grow the 129<sup>th</sup> display for many years. The 129<sup>th</sup> AHA has decided to take on this project. We have, so far, added 2 more uniform displays with a Dessert Storm uniform from CMSgt Mike Schmolli and a female officer's uniform from Col Lina Ruppel. We are slowly adding on to the 129<sup>th</sup> shelves as well.

However, we need your help. Although we have a display of the Officer metal ranks as well as the old and new Enlisted metal ranks; we would like to do a cloth display of the Blue Chevrons for the Enlisted to match the one the Moffett Museum has for the Navy. We purchased all the new ranks but need the older ranks in the male size (bigger) as well as the female size (smaller). We don't have any of the older male size Chevrons (prior to 1975). We are missing the Airman and Airman First Class female size Chevrons. The display will be done with the blue chevrons instead of the fatigued ones because bright colors show better.

If you can help us out with this project, please give CMSgt (ret) Lilliana Ramos a call at 408-263-5352 or send her an email at [lilramos@pacbell.net](mailto:lilramos@pacbell.net).





SrA Mandi Powers  
Airman of the Year



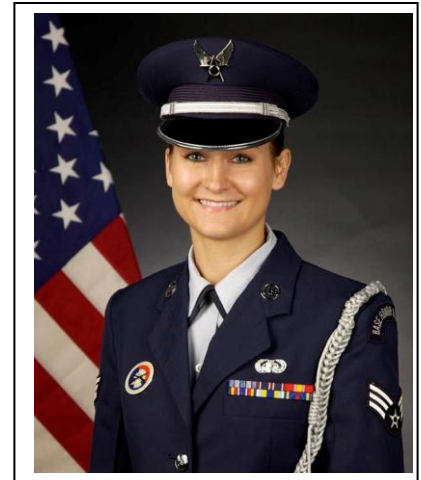
MSgt Sean Kirsch  
Senior NCO of the Year



TSgt Randall Johnson  
NCO of the Year



MSgt Ron Biggs  
First Sergeant of the Year



SrA Holly Dutkin  
Honor Guard

129<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing  
Outstanding Airmen of the Year  
2011

Have some good ideas about things the 129<sup>th</sup> AHA should do?

Want to make changes in the way things are done?

Want to be more involved in the day-to-day operations of the AHA?

Then nominate yourself to become an Officer of the Association!

Any member in good standing (that means your dues are paid) can run for and be elected to the Board of Directors. Officers are elected in even years (2012). Directors at large are elected in odd years (2013).

**Now is your chance!  
Let your voice be heard!  
Choose to become involved!**

**NOMINATION FOR CORPORATION OFFICER**

**Yes! I want to be more involved in the 129<sup>th</sup> AHA!**

**Place my name in nomination for Corporation Officer.**

**President**       **Vice President**       **Secretary-Treasurer**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates of Service in 129<sup>th</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Must be received no later than January 6, 2012. Mail to:

**COL. JOHN L. RUPPEL, JR. (RET.)**

**6718 ZERILLO DRIVE**

**RIVERBANK, CA 95367-2122**

# DFAS to Release 2011 Tax Statements via myPay and U.S. Mail

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (Nov. 29, 2011) – Electronic and postal delivery of 2011 tax statements for military service members, military retirees and federal civilian employees paid by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service will begin by mid-December through January with all customers receiving their W-2s and 1099Rs by January 31.

For most, tax statements will be available online using the DFAS **myPay** pay management system <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx> a week or more earlier than delivery via mail.

## 2011 tax statement **myPay** and USPS mail schedule:

Form/Document	Date available on <b>myPay</b>	Dates mailed via the U.S. Post Office
Retiree Annual Statement (RAS)	Dec. 4, 2011	Dec. 19, 2011 – Jan. 10, 2012
Retiree 1099R	Dec. 15, 2011	Dec. 19, 2011 – Jan. 10, 2012
Annuitant Account Statement (AAS)	Dec. 14, 2011	Dec. 19-31, 2011
Annuitant 1099R	Dec. 14, 2011	Dec. 19-31, 2011
Active Duty Air Force, Army, Navy W-2	Jan. 24, 2012	Jan. 24-29, 2012
Reserve Air Force, Army, Navy W-2	Jan. 6, 2012	Jan. 6-9, 2012
Marine Corps Active & Reserve W-2	Jan. 16, 2012	Jan. 19-21, 2012
Civilian employee W-2 (DoD/Non-DoD)	Jan. 5, 2012	Jan. 7-15, 2012
Military VSI/SSB W-2 *	Not available via <b>myPay</b>	Jan. 4-5, 2012
Savings Deposit Program 1099INT	Jan. 21, 2012	Jan. 21-22, 2012

\* Voluntary Separation Incentive/Special Separation Benefit

\*\* Permanent Change of Station

Military non-appropriate fund civilian employees receive tax statements from their respective military service. Army NAF employee tax statements are made available via **myPay**.

**The myPay advantage** While tax statements are available on **myPay** earlier than waiting for an envelope in the mail, there are other advantages to using the online system throughout the year.

**Availability:** Tax statements available on **myPay** will remain online for one year. These, as well as other documents such as leave and earning statements, may be printed or downloaded for storage on computer hard drives, CDs, DVDs or flash drives.

Except during periodic system maintenance periods, **myPay** is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The only requirements are valid login credentials (ID and password) and a computer connected to the Internet.

**The inner circle:** **myPay** users have a need to allow trusted individuals to access their pay documents and information. Military members deployed away from home may wish to have their spouses, parents or other associates to retrieve information for tax preparation purposes. An elderly retiree may desire to grant access to his or her tax accountant or legal guardian.

Users can establish limited access passwords for their family members or other trusted individuals by logging in and establishing access in their Personal Settings. Individuals granted limited access to a **myPay** account may retrieve documents or view information but cannot make changes to existing addresses, bank accounts, allotments or other pay account information.

**Security:** While each pay account customer has a personal responsibility to keep their login information secure, myPay uses security tools that surpass industry standards to keep that customer's pay information safe. Recently, **myPay** was changed to allow customers accessing the system using a Computer Access Card (CAC) enabled computer to log in without using their login ID or password. This change made the system even easier to use while not compromising its security.

**Savings:** By using **myPay**, each military member, retiree and federal civilian employee saves their department or agency the cost of mailing documents. While each individual W2, 1099R or LES might be inexpensive, the overall costs of mailing millions of individual documents can become substantial. When combined with the environmental costs of paper, printing and delivery, using **myPay** is one way each individual can contribute to ensuring funds are available for their department's mission, such as supporting the needs of military men and women for DoD customers.

# *Chew Ty-ren Yuen*

*6 November 1950 – 3 September 2011*

Chew Ty-ren Yuen, 60, of Desert Hot Springs, Calif., passed away, September 3, 2011, of a heart condition. He was born in Red Bluff, Calif. on November 6, 1950. He graduated from Leigh High School in San Jose, Calif. and attended San Jose State University. He retired after 23 years of service with the U.S. Air Force, Reserves and 129th Air National Guard. He worked for over 20 years at [NASA](#) Ames Wind Tunnel, Moffett Field and most recently for TSA, Palm Springs Airport. He is survived by siblings, Wei-ling Louie of Fullerton, Calif., Mimi Gan of Seattle, Wash., and Gary Gan of Santa Clara, Calif.; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by brother, Chew Le-ren Yuen; parents, Owen Yuen, Grace Gan and stepfather, Manville Gan.



# *MSgt Thomas C. Engen*

*28 October 1948 – 31 October 2011*



Thomas Carl Engen passed away unexpectedly at the age of 63. Thomas has been a resident of Santa Clara County since 1962. Loving brother of Gregory and Carolyn Engen, Rochelle Steel, Brian Engen, and Douglas Engen. Thomas attended Cupertino High School, De Anza College, San Jose State University, and Santa Clara University. He was active in the Air National Guard and the Reserves as a Master Sergeant. As a San Jose State Alumni, Thomas was a big fan of the Spartans. He is also survived by numerous nephews, great nephews, nieces, great nieces and his beloved dog Foxey.

# COMBAT BRAVERY

## Crews' Heroics Hailed

### 11 Airmen Receive Distinguished Flying Cross for Afghanistan Rescue Missions

By John Woolfolk  
[jwoolfolk@mercurynews.com](mailto:jwoolfolk@mercurynews.com)

Their stories are so hair-raising and heroic that they sound like something straight out of a movie. And they're all the more compelling because they're true.

On Saturday, 11 members of the California Air National Guard's 129<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, one of the Air Force's highest honors, at their Moffett Field base in Mountain View for combat rescue missions, often under enemy fire in Afghanistan, during 2009 and 2010.

"It's definitely an honor," said Maj. Mary O. Jennings Hegar, one of the recipients. "When you're there, you're just doing your job. Every single person I work with would have done the same."

Her modesty belies the bravery she and her three crewmates showed July 29, 2009 when they flew their HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter to rescue three wounded U.S. soldiers ambushed in Afghanistan's Kandahar Province.

As soon as they arrived, a bullet "spidered" the craft's windshield with a crack that sounded like a bat hitting a home run, Hegar said. Bullet fragments tore into her arm. After retreating a short distance to ensure the helicopter and crew could still fly, they returned — this time taking fire from a larger, belt-fed machine gun. Lt. Col. George G. Dona held the helicopter steady with guidance from Hegar as aerial gunner Tech. Sgt. TieJie Jones helped load the wounded. With guidance from Senior Master Sgt. Steven Burt and Hegar's critical move to switch from a leaking fuel tank, they limped their bullet-riddled helicopter a couple of miles away before setting it down.

Still under fire, Burt transferred the wounded soldiers to a second helicopter. Hegar, Dona and Jones then flew out on a smaller helicopter, standing on the landing skids and holding onto its rocket launchers. All survived.

"It was pretty Schwarzenegger," Hegar conceded with a smile, referring to the action-hero movie star who was California's governor at the time, while her 10-year-old daughter, parents and husband beamed with pride. Maj. Thomas W. Keegan was honored for purposely drawing enemy fire away from another rescue helicopter during a June 29, 2009 mission in volatile Helmand Province, allowing the other chopper to retrieve a wounded British soldier.

"One of our mottos is these are things we do that others may live," he said.

Lt. Col. Rhys W. Hunt, 2nd Lt. Andrew S. Hedin and Chief Master Sgt. Jason E. Red were sent to rescue five critically wounded U.S. Navy SEALs from the middle of a battle in Kandahar. Their team of helicopters came under heavy fire, including from rocket-propelled grenades, one of which exploded so close it rocked their ship. With Hunt at the controls, they returned fire. Red leaned out of the craft to keep his eye on their foes. Hedin sprayed additional gunfire that knocked out the enemy gunners. They were credited with saving the lives of 16 people as well as two helicopters.

Tech. Sgt. Luigge Romanillo distinguished himself during a May 4, 2010 high-risk mission to extract wounded coalition forces battling more than 100 insurgents in an ambush site near the Tagab Valley. The landing area was a small zone near the center of a contested village with hostile insurgents on the surrounding high terrain. The confined area required the helicopter to hover with the cargo door nearly five feet off the ground. With his aircraft taking fire, Romanillo and his teammate stepped into the firefight, and led his team through a hail of bullets to recover the patients. He was credited with administering lifesaving treatment and with the rescue of two wounded soldiers and recovering the remains of two others who were slain.

Senior Master Sgt. Larry I. Hiyakumoto and Staff Sgt. Joshua M. Webster distinguished themselves on an aerial flight near Bagram Air Field on June 27, 2010, when they participated in eight nonstop casualty evacuation missions over seven hours. On one, Webster was hoisted down from the helicopter to the soldier trapped below while under fire, while Hiyakumoto manned the aircraft's .50-caliber machine gun.

With rounds striking only feet from his position as well as the helicopter above, Webster quickly transported the wounded soldier to safety. While rounds were still striking the aircraft inches from his position, Hiyakumoto began treating the soldier for multiple broken bones and traumatic head injuries. The two saved 13 U.S. and coalition soldiers that day.

Also honored Saturday with the Air Medal were Maj. Mathew C. Wenthe, Capt. Hung D. Nguyen and Tech. Sgt. Joseph R. Kenney.

# Dondi's Mercantile Store

129<sup>th</sup> AHA Merchandise & Apparel

If you would like to order a 129<sup>th</sup> AHA jacket, we again have jackets in stock. Please contact Liliana Ramos for ordering information.

Want to own a really unique & distinctive shirt or cap to show your affiliation with the 129<sup>th</sup> AHA? Dondi's Mercantile Store has a healthy stock of 129<sup>th</sup> AHA related items. Jackets and vests are customized with your name and rank.

All merchandise can be ordered by phone or on-line. Items and prices are shown at right. Shipping and handling are EXTRA.

Order from Liliana Ramos at:

(408) 263-5352

[LilRamos@pacbell.net](mailto:LilRamos@pacbell.net)

or online at

<http://www.129aha.org>

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>COST</u>	<u>SIZES</u>
Logo Jacket or Vest	\$65 - \$80	
Logo Polo Shirts - Men's & Ladies	\$22	M, L, XL, & 2XL
Logo Baseball Cap	\$15	
Large Jacket Patch	\$10	
Small Shirt / Hat Patch	\$5	
Logo Pin	\$5	

All items can be shipped. Shipping and handling are EXTRA. All items are sent via U.S. Mail.

**All profits are used for 129 AHA benefit projects.**

Have you moved? Know a former member of the 129<sup>th</sup> who isn't a member yet?

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / CHANGE OF INFORMATION FORM 2012 Dues \$15.00

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SPOUSE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ ST: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP+4: \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

RANK: \_\_\_\_\_ 129<sup>TH</sup> SERVICE DATES FROM: \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the above information and mail to:

129<sup>th</sup> Alumni & Heritage Association

c/o Col John L. Ruppel, Jr. (ret)

6718 Zerillo Dr.

Riverbank, CA 95367-2122

**If your personal information has changed,  
PLEASE USE THIS FORM AND NOTIFY US IMMEDIATELY!!**

Form is available at [www.129aha.org](http://www.129aha.org)





# Final Fly-By

In Memoriam

MSgt Thomas C. Engen  
Chew Ty-ren Yuen

## COMBAT BRAVERY



Lt. Col. Jay Craddock (retired) presents the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor to Airmen at Moffett Federal Airfield, Calif., Nov. 5, 2011. Craddock is a former group commander at the 129th Rescue Wing. 129th Rescue Wing Airmen heroically performed combat rescue missions in Afghanistan, often under hostile fire, in 2009 and 2010. Because of these actions they received the Distinguished Flying Cross, a medal awarded to servicemembers who distinguish themselves in support of operations by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight. (Air National Guard photos by Airman 1st Class John Pharr)



## Distinguished Flying Cross



Lt Col Rhys W. Hunt  
Maj George G. Dona  
Maj Mary O. Hegar  
Maj Thomas W. Keegan  
2Lt Andrew S. Hedin  
CMSgt Jason E. Red  
SMSgt Larry I. Hiyakumoto  
MSgt Luigge Romanillo  
TSgt TieJie A. Jones  
SSgt Joshua M. Webster

## Air Medal



Maj Mathew C. Wenthe  
Capt Hung D. Nguyen  
TSgt Joseph R. Kenney

**OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION  
AND  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**PRESIDENT**

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[dprussell1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dprussell1@sbcglobal.net)

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SMSgt Joaquin “Joe” Preciado  
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**Are You Missing in Action?**

*Dead Letter Department*

Have you moved recently - or not so recently? Do we have your correct mail and e-mail addresses & phone number? Please let us know when you move.

The newsletter is mailed out with a request for address correction. The post office does not forward the newsletter to you – nor do they return it to us. They charge us 75¢ for providing your forwarding address. Then we update your file, but you do not get a newsletter until next edition unless you request an electronic copy. Total additional cost to the association is nearly \$1.00 per returned newsletter.

Please take a moment to remember the 129<sup>th</sup> AHA when you notify your correspondents of your new address. A member information form is included in every issue.

Col. John L. Ruppel, Jr. (Ret.)  
6718 Zerillo Drive  
Riverbank, CA 95367-2122  
E-mail: [J-L.RUPPEL@ATT.NET](mailto:J-L.RUPPEL@ATT.NET)



Merry Christmas &  
Happy New Year!



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

129<sup>th</sup> Alumni & Heritage Assn.  
C/O Col John L. Ruppel, Jr. (Ret)  
6718 Zerillo Drive  
Riverbank, CA 95367-2122

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