

Volume 17, Issue 2

June 2013

DD-214s Are NOW Online

It's official! DD-214s are NOW Online.

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214s online:

<http://vetrecs.archives.gov/>

This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files.

Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents. Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the online web site. Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized.

The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records center's mail room processing time.

The Prez Sez

The President's Column

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

Congratulations to the Wing on the 1000th save! Read all the details and history in the articles included.

The Old Timers lunch was attended by 78 members and guests. The guest speaker was Doug McNeiley, the Hayward Airport General Manager. He spoke about the Museum being built in the new Airport Administration Building. He asked for any artifacts members might possess from the early days of the 129TH Hayward tenure. Col Steve Butow updated attendees on the Wing's activities and the current USAF 2013 Defense Budget on the Air National Guard. The Association awarded five Wing members \$1,000 Scholarships

The Mercantile Store, by popular request, is offering a polo shirt with an embroidered HH-60, an MC-130, or a combination of the two wing aircraft. The shirts are available by special order only through the Store. Contact Liliana Ramos for ordering information.

We have received notice of the passing of members Lt Col John Norman Komich, CMSgt Earl W. Francis, and Mrs. Joan Erskine, wife of Lt Col Alan Erskine. Obituaries are in the newsletter. We also received notice of the passing of MSgt Richard Blair. Additional information will be distributed by email when received.

An electronic Association Membership Roster will be distributed in the next few weeks. We are working on roster updates to assure the most accurate information, particularly email addresses. If you have changed your contact information, please use the membership update form or send an email and let us know.

And, a quick note regarding the TriCare for Life (TFL) West Region contract change from TriWest to UnitedHealthcare for Military & Veterans – as long as you remain TriCare for Life eligible, you will get TriCare benefits. You will still contact WPS-TFL for assistance and claims processing.

Cheers!

John

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129TH ALUMNI & HERITAGE ASSOCIATION MEMORIAL DAY HONOR ROLL



*Day is done.
Gone the sun
From the hills,
From the sky.
All is well.
Safely rest.
God is nigh.*



| | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| MSGT Pastor D. Abelaye | TSGT Raymond D. Cloutier | CPT Phil Hepner ★ | MAJ Lawrence Mauch | MSGT Thomas Santiago |
| BGen Harold A. Aherns | SRARaeann M. Cordova | TSGT Joe Hernandez | COL Ralston D. McKee | BGen Albert R. Santos |
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| SMSGT Richard Blair | COL Raymond J. Fitts | COL Edwin Kalkowski | COL James M. Newton | COL Herman Vandever |
| LTC Gregory A. Bose | MSGT Herschel Flygare | TSGT John Karpaty | SSGT Charles L. Nobriga | LTC Urban B. Vandever |
| COL John R. Breeden | SSGT Johnny Forlanda | A3C Alan A. Kelley ★ | COL Ralph L. Nobriga | LTC John A. Vinther |
| MSGT Tommy D. Brooks | CMSGT Earl W. Francis | LTC John W. Kenney | LTC Frank Oddo | SSGT Edward C. Vittorio |
| TSGT Greg Brown | LTC Billy Freeman | SMSGT Michael "Kip" Kenney | LTC John W. O'Sullivan | MSGT Bobby Joe Wagner |
| LTC Joseph J. Budro | CWO+ William Gateley | MSGT Henry Kern | LTC Edmund M. Petracek | MSGT Clarence W. Wagner |
| MSGT Sam Burgess | MAJ Russ Gibeson | BGen (Chaplain) James Kintzi | SMSGT Michael Patterson | LTC Louis F. Wang |
| SMSGT Fredrick E. Burkett | SMSgt Howard L. Gibson | BGen Charles W. Koenig | COL Fred H. Petersen | LTC James Ward |
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| TSGT James A. Calvin | SMSGT Wallace J. Glavor | COL Charles J. Kuban | LTC Leonard J. Pringle | CWO+ Edward C. Wiemken |
| LTC Malcom B. Campbell | MSGT Clarence F. Gruenert | SRAMary Lou Lara | Marge Rainsford | CWO+ Edward |
| LTC Neil Campbell | SMSgt Blaine D. Hall | LTC Thomas J. Laut | LTC John Reading | SMSGT Paul F. Wilkins |
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| SMGT Robert Clayton | COL William Hein | COL Edwin W. Lewis, Jr. | COL Lina S. A. Ruppel | MSGT Donald H. Zumsteg |
| SMSGT Vaughn H. Clearman | Mrs. Shirley L. Hemphill | CMSGT Joseph Martin | MSGT Frank M. Sacramento | ★ Killed in Action |

CMSgt Earl W. Francis

22 May 1922 - 5 April 2013



Earl William (Papa) Francis, age 90, was born on May 22, 1922, and was raised in Kansas City, KS. He enlisted in the Army National Guard in October of 1940; he was activated for one year, and was stationed in Little Rock, AR. After the Pearl Harbor attack, his unit was moved by troop train and spent New Year's Eve in the switching yards of Los Angeles. They were split up by companies and performed guard duty for Burbank, Glendale and Riverside Airbases. After a year they moved to Camp Hood in Texas for another year of training. Their equipment was stationed in San Francisco, CA, since they were to support the Pacific Theater, but plans changed so they were sent to NY for deployment to the European Theater. Earl, now with the 635th Infantry, journeyed to Liverpool, England, onboard the HMS Andes and landed on February 19, 1944. This gave them time to join the Normandy beachhead invasion on June 7th and 8th. By V-E Day (May 8, 1945), they were in Lambach, Austria. They were assigned the duty of guarding, feeding, and administering the P.O.W. cages. Following his time in the service, he worked for the US Army Air Guard for the next 25 years until he retired.

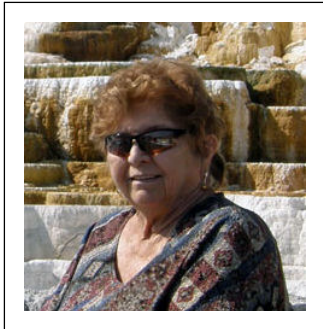
In 1983, Earl met his wife, Virginia, in Lourdes, France, on a Catholic tour of Europe. They fell in love, and were married one year later. Earl and Virginia enjoyed traveling back to Europe, as well as to Hawaii on several occasions. They also enjoyed RVing to many spots in New Mexico for a great many years. Earl was an avid flower gardener and enjoyed fishing. He proudly raised and saluted the US flag in the front yard every morning.

Earl was a parishioner of Holy Family Parish, and went home to be with Our Lord on the morning of April 5, 2013. Earl is survived by his wife, Virginia DeTevis-Francis; daughters, Diane Hoover and husband, Mike; Yvonne Aranda-Tafoya and husband, Joseph Tafoya; Denise Aranda and husband, Mike Garcia; son Daniel Aranda and wife, Rita; grandchildren, Michael and Angela Hoover, and Jared and Zoey Aranda-Tafoya; great-granddaughter, Catherine Hoover; brother Robert Francis and sister, Betty Corns; and many nieces and nephews.

Earl was a wonderful husband, father, brother, Papa, and friend and he will be missed greatly.

Joan C. Erskine

10 July 1938 – 5 May 2013



Joan C. Erskine, 74, passed away on Sunday, May 5, 2013, at Waccamaw Community Hospital, Murrells Inlet, SC, with her husband, Alan, and daughter, Heather, by her side. Joan had fought several different debilitating medical problems during the past 8 years, but always maintained a fighter's perspective and a positive outlook.

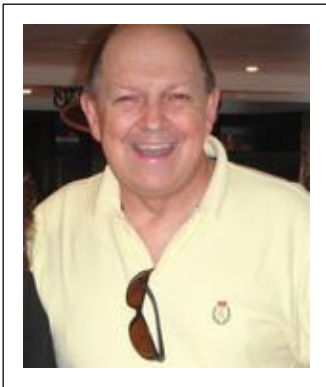
She was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and moved with her parents to San Francisco at a very early age. Joan attended The Mission Dolores School, Notre Dame High School, UC Berkeley (B.A.), and the University of San Francisco (M.A.). Joan was a dedicated member of the San Francisco Unified School District for 40 years, serving as a teacher and mentor to elementary and junior high school students. She taught for 3 additional years at The Quarry Lane School in Dublin, and was instrumental in helping them achieve state accreditation. She met Alan, her beloved husband of 39 years, while he was stationed at Hamilton AFB near Novato, CA. She is survived by her husband, who resides in Bemus Point, NY, and Murrells Inlet, SC, according to the seasons, and daughter, Heather, who resides in the greater Boston area.

Joan's greatest moments in life were teaching children and relishing in the joy of her family. She also enjoyed being involved in activities at the 129th RQW, and brought several of her school classes to visit the unit. Joan loved her numerous rescued pets, painting ceramics, traveling to new places, and her winters in South Carolina.

Donations can be made to the American Red Cross or your local animal shelter.

Lt Col John Norman Komich

2 April 1944 - 21 January 2013



John Norman Komich, "Norm", 68, beloved husband of Joy (DiBuono) Komich, with whom he shared 32 years of marriage, died Monday, January 21 at Mass General Hospital. Born in Brunswick, Maine, he is the son of the late John and Vada (Clukey) Komich.

Norm lived in Augusta, Maine, and moved to Beverly when he was ten. He graduated from Beverly High School and UMASS Amherst. Norm then attended and graduated with his MBA from Cal State Hayward. He was a U.S. Veteran having served in the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War. For many years, Norm was employed as a pilot for Eastern Airlines, Trump Shuttle, and for U.S. Airways until his retirement. He was currently teaching and mentoring students at Endicott College. Norm was the Commander for the Beverly Veterans of Foreign Wars, a member of the Vietnam Veterans, and a member of the Vittori Rocci Post in Beverly.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by one son: Johnathan Komich of Boston; one brother: Lee Komich and his wife Gray of Alexandria, VA; four local cousins: Michael Komich and his wife Debi of South Portland, ME, Liz Murphy and her husband Robert of Arlington, Richard Leahy and his wife Jane of Marblehead, and Randy Komich of Boston; one sister-in-law: Debbie Mudd and her husband Michael of Riverview, FL; four nieces and nephews: Carolyn and Carla Komich and Kristin and Michael Mudd; and four great nieces and nephews: Owen, Ella, Jamie and Connor.

In lieu of flowers, Memorial Donations may be made in Norm's Memory to the Wounded Warrior Project, P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675 or www.woundedwarriorproject.org.



1,000 Saves – 1,000 Heroes

Commentary by Col. Steven J. Butow
Commander, 129th Rescue Wing

Congratulations to the nearly 1,000 Airmen of the 129th Rescue Wing on achieving 1,000 lives saved since 1975. Your noble efforts and selfless dedication to duty define our wing's relevance and commitment to our Air Force Core Values of Integrity First, Service Before Self and Excellence In All We Do.

The 129th Rescue Wing achieved an impressive milestone on May 18th when it performed its 1,000th life-saving rescue in the high desert of Southeast Afghanistan. HH-60G alert crews and pararescuemen responded to save the life of an Afghan National policeman critically injured with a gunshot wound. Like so many before him, the soldier was rescued, treated and safely returned to advanced medical care so that he may live another day.

Perhaps more impressive than the 1,000 save milestone is the realization that 70% of these saves have been performed in the last ten years. Only 40% of our saves were performed in combat, the rest were performed here in the homeland across a broad range of environments and conditions. Highlights over the past 30 years include recovering injured climbers from the top of Mount Shasta, rescuing critically ill sailors from the East Pacific, rescuing hurricane survivors from floodwaters, extracting trapped motorists from beneath the collapsed Cyprus structure following the Loma Prieta Earthquake, hoisting flood victims from the Russian River, and saving firemen from wildfires in remote areas throughout the state of California.

While these missions may seem routine, they are far from it. Each mission presents unique challenges that require skill and experience aided by innovation and advanced technology. The blend of talent and diversity uniquely available in the San Francisco Bay Area is key to the wing's success and defines both its culture and place in the Silicon Valley community.

The 129th Rescue Wing is part of an elite force of Airmen that are specifically trained and dedicated to perform the mission of personnel recovery. As such, the wing is often requested to execute missions that are either too risky or beyond the capability of other forces to perform. These heroic deeds would not be possible without the contributions of a larger team of California Air National Guard men and women who volunteer time away from family and their full-time jobs here in Silicon Valley to save lives.

While we take time to celebrate this proud achievement, we must also pay tribute and honor the memories of 129th Airmen who made the ultimate sacrifice so that others may live. Like those they rescued, the lives of their families were forever changed and we will never forget them.

129th RQW Airmen Achieve Milestone 1000th Save

**by Senior Airman Jessica Green
129th Rescue Wing Public Affairs**

The millennial milestone was reached on May 18, 2013 when aircrews and pararescuemen from the 129th Rescue Wing, deployed to Afghanistan, rescued an Afghan national policeman who had suffered a gunshot wound, raising the number of lives saved by the unit to 1,000.

Since its inception nearly four decades ago, the 129th RQW has launched countless missions from its home station of Moffett Federal Airfield and various deployed locations resulting in 1,000 lives saved. The wing is credited with over 400 combat saves and nearly 600 civilian saves. In addition, the wing has assisted in over 600 other saves.

Embracing the motto of the Air Force Rescue community, "That Others May Live," the 129th's federal mission is to "rapidly deploy worldwide to conduct combat search and rescue operations, over land or water, in both hostile and permissive environments." In addition to its combat mission, as a California National Guard asset, the wing provides civilian search and rescue support to the Governor during times of State emergencies, including earthquakes, hurricanes, fires and floods.

For members of the wing, saving lives is the most honorable and important mission they will undertake. A "save" is defined as a recovered individual in danger of losing their life, a limb, or eyesight. Save missions are conducted by highly trained personnel. A pararescueman, also known as a "PJ," makes the final determination of patient's status, and documents that status in the final mission report. Patient status is determined independently of the patient category reported in the initial rescue request (e.g., urgent, urgent surgical, priority, routine, and convenience). If a 129th RQW member participated in a recovery mission, whether as pickup aircraft, formation partner, or ground team, then a "save" is credited to the wing.

Operating in California since 1955, the 129th was brought to life at the Hayward Airport as an Air Resupply Group tasked to airlift personnel and material using Curtiss C-46 Commando aircraft. Not long after its launch, the group underwent a variety of name changes, several aircraft conversions and multiple Air Force major command assignments.

The wing's rescue presence dates back to 1975 when it was designated as the 129th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group operating HC-130 Hercules cargo aircraft and HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopters.

The 129th ARRG conducted its first rescue mission in 1977 during a Red Flag combat exercise at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. One of the group's Jolly Green Giant helicopters saved a severely injured pilot that ejected from an A-7 attack aircraft before it crashed into a nearby range.

To provide better rescue capability to the state and the nation, the 129th ARRG moved to Naval Air Station Moffett Field. The move was completed in 1984.

The first long-range, over-water rescue mission was completed Oct. 13, 1986 to rescue a crewman with appendicitis from the ship MS Reunion. The 129th ARRG coordinated with local U.S. Coast Guard assets to successfully rescue the patient and transport him to a hospital in Acapulco, Mexico. The rescue mission, resulting in the group's 145th save, covered a total of 4,200 miles, including 1,200 miles flown over water. To date, it is still the furthest distance the wing has traveled to execute a mission.

The 129th ARRG continued its service to the state throughout the late 1980s. During the 1986 flooding in Sonoma, Sutter and Yuba counties in Northern California, 33 lives were saved in five days. In the aftermath of the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, the 129th established command post operations and was chosen to coordinate all military aircraft activities within the Bay Area. By decade's end, the group had saved 190 people.

The first operational night mission was flown Dec. 27, 1991, to rescue a crewman with major facial and bodily injuries onboard the MV Martha Majesty more than 400 miles southwest of San Francisco, resulting in save 207.

continued on next page

129th RQW Airmen Achieve Milestone 1000th Save

continued from previous page

Having successfully transitioned from Jolly Green Giant helicopters to more modern Pave Hawk rescue helicopters in 1991, the group was expanded into the 129th Rescue Wing in 1992 and extended its rescue detachments into squadrons, resulting in the current assignments of the 129th, 130th and 131st Rescue Squadrons at the renamed Moffett Federal Airfield. Today, HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters, MC-130P Combat Shadow aircraft, and Guardian Angel pararescuemen are assigned to these squadrons, respectively.

Through its transformation years the group remained mission ready and established an impressive pattern that would be followed for years to come.

An impromptu rescue, resulting in the wing's 250th save, was conducted on April 4, 1996, when Combat Shadow aircrews diverted from a routine training mission near Moffett to save a Navy pilot who had ejected from his F-18 Hornet fighter aircraft 30 miles off the coast of Big Sur, Calif. The Combat Shadow aircrew dropped a survival kit, including a life raft, medical supplies, food, water and a radio, while Pave Hawk aircrews and Pararescuemen dispatched to the scene, hoisted the pilot to safety and transported him to Stanford Hospital.

After the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, citizen-Airmen from the 129th RQW deployed to support rescue missions for Operations Northern Watch, Southern Watch, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, setting an unprecedented standard in combat search and rescue efforts, supporting rescue operations in five countries, all while still supporting their stateside mission.

While deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 129th RQW executed the first combat save for any Air National Guard or Reserve unit on April 15, 2003. Pave Hawk aircrews picked up a severely injured Special Forces soldier from an isolated location and transported him across hostile Iraqi territory to a field hospital during inclement nighttime weather, resulting in the wing's 299th save. During the 2003 deployment to Iraq, the wing sustained zero aircraft or personnel losses, injuries or mishaps and executed 15 saves, bringing the wing's total to 310 lives saved.

In 2005, more than 230 lives were saved in Afghanistan in support of OEF and in the Gulf of Mexico in response to Hurricane Katrina. While deployed to Kandahar in September, 20 lives were saved during multiple high-altitude combat rescue missions, typically in hostile territory under severe darkness. On the home front, Airmen provided lifesaving rescue operations and disaster relief following the hurricane that devastated the New Orleans and Mississippi Gulf Coast area. As first responders, PJs saved 212 lives while searching for survivors in rescue boats down flooded suburban streets. Similarly, Airmen from the wing saved 34 lives in the Texas Gulf Coast area in response to Hurricane Ike in 2008, totaling in 598 lives saved for the wing.

During their four-month deployment to Afghanistan in 2009, 129th RQW aircrews and pararescuemen saved 307 lives, the largest number of lives saved by the wing during a single deployment. The intense combat deployment saves included rescues of coalition forces, local nationals and sister service members, totaling in 907 lives saved for the wing. The following year, PJs again deployed to Afghanistan, saving an additional 37 lives, increasing the wing's total to 946.

More recently, the 129th RQW has successfully launched an impressive series of complex civilian rescue missions, saving distressed crewmen on international vessels off the golden coast.

129th RQW aircrews and PJs saved the life of an injured crewman onboard a Marshall Islands flagged merchant vessel approximately 300 miles off the coast of Mexico on Nov. 29, 2012. PJs treated the patient during the two-hour flight back to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, where the patient was subsequently transported to San Diego for further treatment. This multiday rescue brought the total number of lives saved by the wing to 957. On May 4, 2013, 129th RQW Airmen, stationed at Moffett and deployed to Afghanistan, collectively saved five lives during two separate missions, despite being more than 7,500 miles apart. While Pave Hawk rescue helicopters here are painted with large hot-pink tails numbers for wildfire season, aircrews were called to rescue a critically ill passenger from a Holland American cruise ship, the MS Westerdam, 300 miles off the coast of Southern California. Meanwhile, deployed helicopter aircrews were called to rescue four distressed individuals in Afghanistan.

Since 1975, the 129th RQW has a long and distinguished record of saving lives for both California and the nation. They continue to dedicate themselves to the personnel recovery mission at home and abroad, resulting in more than 400 combat and nearly 600 civilian rescues, bringing the total number of lives saved to 1,000 and counting.

Dondi's Mercantile Store

129th AHA Merchandise & Apparel

If you would like to order a 129th 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 129th AHA? Dondi's Mercantile Store has a healthy stock of 129th 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

or online at

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

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>COST</u> | <u>SIZES</u> |
|----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Logo Jacket or Vest | \$65 - \$80 | |
| Polo Shirts - Blackhawk & 130 | \$25 & up | Special Order |
| Logo Baseball Cap | \$15 | |
| Large Jacket Patch | \$10 | |
| Small Shirt / Hat Patch | \$5 | |
| Logo Pins | \$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 129th who isn't a member yet?

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / CHANGE OF INFORMATION FORM 2013 Dues \$15.00

NAME: _____ SPOUSE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ ST: _____ ZIP+4: _____ + _____

TELEPHONE: _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

RANK: _____ 129TH SERVICE DATES FROM: _____ TO _____

Please complete the above information and mail to:

129th 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

129th Alumni & Heritage Assn.
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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 or change your email address.

The newsletter is only mailed to those with NO email access. We request address correction, but 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. If you change your email address and don't tell us, your newsletter bounces and you get no newsletter.

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

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