



# 39<sup>TH</sup> ENGINEER BATTALION ALUMNI NEWS



JUNE, 2013

President.....	Bruce Fonest	Sgt. at Arms.....	Blayne Jones
Vice President.....	Bill Ray	Webmaster.....	Walter Lester
Secretary.....	Floyd Babcock	Historian.....	Jerry Bright
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## 2013 REUNION UPDATE

### VICE PRESIDENT NEWS

I would like to thank each and every member for their participation in our first raffle drawing with the grand prize being an all expense paid suite for the 2013 reunion in Tucson, AZ. The grand prize winner is Mike Shaw (C Co. 70-71); runner-ups are Joe Smith (A Co. 71) and Gary Musick (D Co. 67-68); in the event the winner is unable to attend the first runner-up will be contacted etc. It is the hope of the reunion chairman that we will be able to continue this for our upcoming reunions.

Due to the participation in the raffle along with members purchasing 39th memorabilia at the reunions and throughout the year, the Association will be able to shift some of the burden off the shoulders of members and pick up more of the expenses that are incurred in putting on our reunions and these expenses keep rising. As we age, hopefully more members will be able to attend reunions. But in the same instance, some if not all, of us will be living on fixed incomes. Keeping members' expenses to a minimum needs to be our priority.

In the past, several members have asked about purchasing 39th merchandise such as windbreakers, shirts etc. At this time, we do not keep a large quantity of merchandise in stock. However, if any member is interested in acquiring any of our past merchandise, please contact me; if enough are interested we may be able to go back to our suppliers, but I am sure there will be quantity minimums.

I would like to thank our members for keeping the Association up to date on changes to their contact information; this is the only way that we can keep each of you informed as to upcoming events. So, please continue to send your changes to: Bill Ray, 6205 Big Springs Dr., Arlington, TX. 76001, 817-239-0787 or you can e-mail to bill39th@sbcglobal.net.

Now for a big "Blue Bull Welcome" to our New Members and New Lifetime Members; it is with great pleasure to welcome you to the Association.

#### NEW MEMBERS:

Chris Argento, A Co 66-67

#### LIFETIME MEMBERS:

Chuck Faler, C Co 67-68

Jacob "Jake" Neta, C Co 66-67

Richard Smith

C Co 67-68, A Co 68

I would also like to welcome back one of our old members that we somehow lost contact with and even had him listed as deceased on the roster.

Bill Jernigan, C Co 68-69

Gale and Diane Helser have completed the final arrangements for the 2013 reunion and all information is contained in this newsletter. Carolyn and I looking forward to seeing each of you this September in Tucson and please be safe in any and all of your travels.

#### BROTHERS THEN, BROTHERS NOW, BROTHERS FOREVER

Bill Ray

Vice President

3<sup>rd</sup> Plt. C Co. 67-68

## THE CHAPLAIN'S WORD

Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives!

As you know, this past year we traveled to Washington, D.C. for the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Vietnam Memorial Wall. While in the District of Columbia, many of us traveled to the other War Memorials that are so predominant in the DC and Virginia area. We visited the Marine Museum and were very moved and impressed by the way they told the story about the origin of the Marines and their actions throughout history. All the memorials tell a sad story of conflict, the loss of life, and national treasure. Moreover, to see a monument that you can personally identify with is very traumatic, but to see written upon it the names of people you served with is chilling to the bone.

However, it was during the roundtrip drive to and from Washington that I had a chance to listen to some music I brought with me for the ride. Of course, I listened to some Byzantine Chants and our beloved seasonal hymns, but I also brought with me music that I use to sing in my youth, DOO-WOPS.

The ride gave me a chance to hear for an extended amount of time the music that meant so much to me growing up. It was during the summer evenings that I would meet up with my friends at Erasmus Hall High School, in Brooklyn, New York, and sing under the large arch at the entrance of the school which made a perfect echo chamber. Almost every night, thousands of teenagers would gather and we would sing our best rendition of the pop tunes of the day. "Sixteen Candles," "The Closer You Are," and many other blue harmony songs that were so prevalent in the late '50's and 60's.

Sitting in my car, listening and singing along with them, made me realize how fortunate I was as a child to grow up with such songs that only spoke of love and togetherness. How unfortunate for kids today who grow up with songs that speak of violence, anger, and hatred toward others. Father Thaddeus, in his book entitled "Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives," says that "When we nurture evil thoughts, we become evil. We do not have the strength to resist it. And we know that as Christians, we must not even think evil, let alone do it. . .but it is unfortunate that we do not have examples to guide us, either in our families or in society."

On the other hand, I did not have to travel far to see real life examples of true love and respect for each other. My parents treated my sister and I with love and

respect, and I think that is why the Doo Wops really have had such an effect on me. We saw first-hand what love and respect can do.

During my first trip to Sinai and St. Catherine's Monastery, I also sang love songs from the 50's and 60's when I was setting up the table for lunch when I thought no one was around. It was a large room and a perfect echo chamber. Some of the monks that passed by asked me to stop, however when they left I continued to belt out some of my favorites like, "Gloria and Little Star." I guess it is my way of giving back to God the many blessings that He is constantly giving us in this world, especially the ability to love. What else do we have that is real and lasting? It is only love, and a love that is not self-centered, but directed at another.

I am sure that my Vietnam buddies remember the times I would play 45's (records) on my small battery-powered portable phonograph, and we would gather around singing familiar songs from America. These songs were a great comfort to all of us no matter where each of us came from. It was the first time that I ever heard songs by Jefferson Airplane, Lothar and the Hand People, and other groups from the San Francisco Bay area. Nevertheless, I preferred songs about hope, love, and togetherness instead of the psychedelic music that began its rise in the mid-to-late sixties.

Furthermore, Father Thaddeus has a point about what we think becomes our actions and wants, when he says that "Our thoughts, moods, and desires set a path for our life. Our thoughts reflect our whole life. If our thoughts are quiet, peaceful, and full of love, kindness, and purity, then we have peace, for peaceful thoughts make possible the existence of inner peace, which radiates from us. However, if we breed negative thoughts, then our inner peace is shattered."

Finally, do not think that just because I sing and love songs that reflect this idea that I was and am not tempted by the evil one! No one is left alone, but we have to learn to fight thoughts that will move us to do evil at any cost. "We must struggle for our own good and strive for peace to take root in our souls – peace, joy, and Divine Love. Our Heavenly Father wants all of His children to have His Divine properties. He wants us to be full of love, peace, joy, trustfulness, and kindness. . . There are very few such people on this earth, but they are the reason why the sun still warms plant Earth and why God gives us His blessing to go on living and to have everything we need in order to live. You see now why our thoughts must change." Amen!

Fr. William (Billy) Bassakyros



## 39<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion Alumni Reunion 2013 Operation "Old West" Tucson, Arizona

**Please return with your selections and payment by August 31, 2013.**

Mail to: Gale D Helser, Reunion Chair – 32423 FM 2925 – Rio Hondo, Texas 78583. (956-367-0999)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name/Nickname for badge \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name/Nickname for badge \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cellular \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee \_\_\_\_ \$45 members \_\_\_\_ \$35 guest(s) Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*(Registration includes: Hospitality room beverages, snacks and supplies – Pizza Party – Annual members gift)*

**Sunday Trip:** Tombstone Wild West \_\_\_\_ # persons @ \$25.00 Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Monday Trip:** Titan Missile Silo, Pima Air Museum, Boneyard \_\_\_\_ # persons @ \$40.00 Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*(Government ID (driver's license or passport) **required** for entry to Boneyard on Davis Monthan Air Force Base)*

**Tuesday Banquet** \_\_\_\_ # persons @ \$45.00

\_\_\_\_ # Beef \_\_\_\_ # Chicken \_\_\_\_ # Vegetarian Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Make checks payable to: 39th Engr Bn Alumni Assn.**

Please describe any dietary restrictions or special needs, physical conditions requiring any special needs (i.e., roll-in shower, use of walker/scooter/wheelchair, etc.) and an emergency contact name and phone number.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you are flying in, please provide:

Date arriving: \_\_\_\_\_

Time arriving: \_\_\_\_\_

Airline & flight number: \_\_\_\_\_

*(If you are not renting a car, the hotel does not have an airport shuttle. However, we will make every attempt to arrange transportation to the hotel.)*

**Please return with your selections and payment by August 31, 2013.**

## FROM THE REUNION CHAIR

Reunion 2012 is just a memory, but it sure left some really good ones. Our turnout was outstanding and we all made more connections with many of our brothers, some old and many new. DC is always a tough act to follow, but we are giving it a Bluebull try. This year, by popular vote at our general meeting, takes us to Tucson, Arizona. Each year we locate our reunion locations so that as many of our members as possible get the opportunity to attend a reunion within a reasonable distance of where they live with airports that carry a good number of airlines for better flight costs. Our goal is to locate East, then West, then Central and keep this rotation.

Tucson is an exciting area for a reunion and we have worked and planned with great care to make this year a huge success. Our schedule is very full and we are sure that everyone will leave Tucson with some wonderful memories. Though our schedule is quite full, we have left ample time for renewing old friendships and acquaintances and developing some new ones. It's always interesting to compare notes about our past experiences and catch up on our life experiences since The Nam. I know that every year our remembrances just get bigger and better. It won't be long until we can profess to having saved the world singlehandedly (or at least, in our own minds become an indispensable part of history). I can't wait to hear this year's versions of last year's stories.

And now, IT'S TIME!!! Time to get your reservations made for this year's 39th Eng Bn 2013 Reunion in Tucson, Arizona from Sept 28th through Oct 2nd. This year, we added a day to accommodate extra events planned and for additional time to spend with each other. Tucson has so much to offer! We even negotiated with the Hilton to honor our special \$81.00 rate for 3 days prior and 3 days after the reunion dates for those who may wish to take advantage and make it a longer vacation. There really is a lot to do in the area. Here's the number to call for reservations, direct to **Hilton East Tucson 520-721-5660**.

If you are driving, we'll send directions once your registration form is returned. For those who fly in, we will make every effort to arrange for pick up at the airport. (The hotel does not make an airport run due to the distance from the hotel. However, if you give us your flight information, we will try to arrange to pick you

up.) Once you have made your flight reservations, be sure to include your info on the registration form or send it directly to Gale or Bill. We need arrival date and time, airline and flight number. Airlines that service Tucson are Alaska, American, Delta, Southwest, United and US Airways.

On Saturday, once you have checked in to the hotel, come to the lobby area to register and pick up your information packet. At 6:00pm, the Hilton will host a Welcome Reception pool side with free soft drinks, coffee and light snacks. There will also be a cash bar. Immediately following the reception, the Hospitality Room will open for the entirety of the reunion. Hospitality supplies and sundries are included in your registration fee. Get some rest Saturday night as we have a busy Sunday planned. A free breakfast will be served on the 7th floor every morning. Check your info packet for times. We will also post all of the activities on the website.

Sunday Trip: We will be off on our motor coach for the historic city of Tombstone where the famous Gunfight at the OK Corral took place. You will be able to visit Boot Hill and watch reenactments of gunfights. There are also "Old West" style streets and stores where you can find almost anything western you may be interested in. Our next stop will be the historic Fort Huachuca for a visit to the Forts Museum. We are still working on additional events at the Fort, but will have that finalized very soon. Sunday night features our annual Pizza Party.

Monday Trip: After breakfast, we will once again board our motor coach and head out for the day to visit the Titan Missile Silos, Pima Air Museum and the "Boneyard". This is a guided tour down into the missile silos where once stood the defenses of our country. No longer used, they have been preserved just as they were as a Museum. Next, we are off to the Pima Air Museum to get up close to some very interesting aircraft. If you would rather ride than walk around, they offer a guided tram tour of the flight line. To finish off the day we will board our coach for a guided tour of the "Boneyard" located near the Davis Monthan Air Force base located in the heart of Tucson. It's the 3rd largest Air Force Base in the world. You will understand why once you've seen it for yourself. A government ID (driver's license or passport) is required. And finally, it's back to the hotel for some hospitality and beverages.

Tuesday Activities: We have left Tuesday open for everyone to explore on their own some of the many attractions and places to visit. Try your luck at one of the many Casinos in the area, Visit Pinnacle Peak for still more of the old west flavor. Interested in space? The University of Arizona Steward Observatory features a Mirror Lab Tour where giant telescope mirrors are made. Near Tombstone lies the Kartchner Caverns, a living cave formed over 100,000 years ago. Or, maybe a tour of downtown Tucson and the El Presidio Historic District is more your style. The Gaslight Theatre is very near our hotel with a live melodramatic performance of Frankenstein while we are there. This is a casual dining-type theatre. There is so much to do; you will want to spend some extra time in the area. At the end of this article is a list of web sites you can visit to get a more detailed report of each of the activities.

Brothers then, Brothers now,  
Gale Helser  
(galehelser@peoplepc.com)  
(956) 367-0999

## FROM OUR HISTORIAN

**COURAGE** - In my humble opinion, there were 13 reunion attendees who showed exceptional courage by reading names at The Wall on Veterans Day weekend of our DC reunion. Some had done this before while others were rookies, but all were heroes. Travel delays gave a few very little time to rush to the National Mall. At times, there were more people behind at The Wall than seated in front of the stage. Whether in the light of day or the dark of night, these volunteer readers bravely stood in front of more than 58,000 souls. 2 minutes to read 30 names seemed like an eternity that was over very quickly. Most had the reinforcing companionship of other 39th brothers and sisters. In spite of any preceding nervousness, a calm seemed to take control at the podium where it was just the reader and a list of 30 fallen comrades. Some readers graciously read again as they realized that other readers had not arrived. Do not miss a chance to do this, possibly in 2017 at the 35th anniversary of The Wall.

**Veterans Day Ceremonies at The Wall** - It was a beautiful day for this moving event. Jim Ton and Father

Vasilios presented our memory wreath, which was donated by the florist for Father Vasilios' church. Our thanks to Diane Helser for marshalling our attendees to their designated seats. Tag-a-longs may have exceeded our 40 seats, and our apologies are offered for any inconvenience this may have caused.

**Pick the Right Target** - During the year and at the Reunions, there is a fair amount of complaining about government, especially about benefits for veterans and retirees. Getting things out in the open is part of our fellowship. Keeping it to ourselves does no good, and our Brothers cannot do much more than listen and agree. We also need to tell the people who have the power to do something, i.e., our elected representatives. It's fairly easy to find and to contact them at:

<http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>,

[http://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm),

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

A few million of us poor guys might equal one rich fellow. *Essayons* = Let us try!

Jerry Bright, Historian

## AREA ATTRACTIONS

39th Home Page – [www.39thengrnb.com](http://www.39thengrnb.com)

Tucson CVB – [www.visitTucson.org](http://www.visitTucson.org)

Tucson Hilton East – [www.tucsonhiltoneast.com](http://www.tucsonhiltoneast.com)

Tombstone – [www.tombstonechamber.com](http://www.tombstonechamber.com)

Ft. Huachuca – [www.huachuca.army.mil](http://www.huachuca.army.mil)

Titan Missile Silo – [www.titanmissilemuseum.org](http://www.titanmissilemuseum.org)

Pima Air Museum – [www.pimaair.org](http://www.pimaair.org)

Boneyard – [www.dm.af.mil/units/amarc.asp](http://www.dm.af.mil/units/amarc.asp)

Steward Observatory – <http://mirrorlab.as.arizona.edu>

Kartchner Caverns – [www.AZStateParks.com](http://www.AZStateParks.com)

So. AZ Transportation Museum –

[www.TucsonHistoricDepot.org](http://www.TucsonHistoricDepot.org)

Desert Diamond Casino –

[www.desertdiamondcasino.com](http://www.desertdiamondcasino.com) (free hotel shuttle)

Mission San Xavier – [www.sanxaviermission.org](http://www.sanxaviermission.org)

Gaslight Theatre – [www.gaslighttheatre.com](http://www.gaslighttheatre.com)

Pinnacle Peak Restaurant – [www.traildusttown.com](http://www.traildusttown.com)

OK Corral – [www.okcorral.com](http://www.okcorral.com)

BoneYard You Tube – [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

watch?v=1i9wQGidG2M (video by joehandsome99)



**39th Engineer Battalion Alumni**  
32423 FM 2925  
Rio Hondo, TX 78583



## **39th Engineer Battalion Hats, Shirts, Sweatshirts and Crests**

Contact: Jim Shamblen (757) 838-5654 for information on prices and availability.

# **2013 TENTATIVE TUCSON ITINERARY**

The 2013 reunion headquarters will be at the Hilton Tucson East, 7600 E. Broadway, Tucson, AZ 85710, direct phone to the hotel is **520-721-5600** and will be held September 28 thru October 2, 2013. Room rates are \$81.00 per night, double occupancy, excluding tax; this rate is valid 3 days prior and 3 days past the scheduled reunion dates. For more than two per room, add \$14.00 per person per day. All rooms are on the Executive Level and include breakfast and daily manager's cocktail reception every evening.

The hotel is ultra-modern with all rooms on the Executive Level complete with deluxe continental breakfast and a manager's reception each afternoon. The hotel also has a full service dining room (serving breakfast, lunch and dinner), lounge and an excellent outdoor patio and swimming pool; we will also have our customary hospitality room. With the numerous attractions in the Tucson area, we encourage those who can, to drive; or, if flying, to rent a car. The hotel has plenty of free parking for autos and RV's. The hotel does not provide shuttle service to and from the airport (we will do our best to accommodate your needs), but does have service for the immediate area. There are also numerous dining establishments within close proximity of the hotel for your eating pleasure

Reservations can be made by calling 800-HILTONS; **be sure to say that you are with the 39th Eng Bn Alumni Association.** If some unforeseen circumstance should arise, cancellations can be made up to 48 hours prior to arrival date for a full refund.

### **TENTATIVE ITINERARY**

#### **SATURDAY, SEPT. 28**

Registration-Hotel Lobby  
Welcome Reception-Poolside  
Hospitality Room Open

#### **MONDAY, SEPT. 30**

Breakfast-Executive Level  
Titan Missile Museum-Morning  
Pima Air Museum-Mid Morning  
Boneyard Tour-Afternoon  
Hospitality Room Open

**WEDNESDAY, OCT. 2** - Farewell Breakfast-Hotel / Reunion Ends-Members Return Home

#### **SUNDAY, SEPT. 29**

Breakfast-Executive Level  
Tombstone Wild West Re-enactments  
Fort Huachuca-Visit the Forts Museum  
Pizza Party-Evening/Hospitality Room

#### **TUESDAY, OCT. 1**

Breakfast-Executive Level  
Members free to sightsee on their own  
General Membership Meeting  
Cocktail Hour/Banquet-Ballroom  
Hospitality Room Open

Bus transportation will be provided for all tours Sunday and Monday. There is plenty to see in the area for your free day and we will have literature available from the Tucson CVB. We look forward to seeing you this year in sunny Tucson, AZ to renew old friendships and create new ones.

**BROTHERS THEN, BROTHERS NOW, BROTHERS FOREVER,  
BILL RAY, ASSISTANT REUNION CHAIR**