



601st-615th ACW Association Newsletter - Vol 6 No. 1- July 2015

New elected officers of the Association



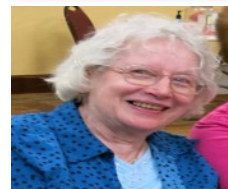
George Vitzhum,
President



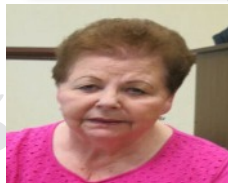
Dick Butler,
Vice President



Terry Troy,
Treasurer



LoAnne Zentner,
Secretary



Fay, Events
Coordinator

At the annual reunion at Charleston, SC lots of things were changed by the membership. Now there is a new board of directors with new faces and fresh ideas to guide the Association the next two years. Also, it was decided that the next annual reunion will be at Omaha, Nebraska!

The changes also brought about an increase in annual dues to \$35.00, payable to Terry Troy, our new treasurer. Moreover, a new secretary, LoAnne Zentner and Event Coordinator, Fay Dickie were elected. Please read the minutes of the reunion on page two of this newsletter.

The event was colorful and the reunion pictures were excellent. You may see reunion pictures at our web site www.601st-615th-acw.org/index.html. As always, George Biscoe did an outstanding job and created some fantastic pictures! As you know, you may download any picture from our web site. If you need assistance, email our Web Master, William Hanson, at whanson@graceba.net.

On this edition you will find the minutes of the reunion. Dick Pfeiffer tells us about **The Battle of Palmdale**; you will be made aware of **Ten things that will Disappear in our lifetime**; and a interesting trip that Mrs Marika Aragon made to West Germany. We tell you about The Thrill of Shopping With A Woman and how **Ann Margret** changed the life of some during her tours to Vietnam, and, lastly, we pay tribute to two of our members who just celebrated their 55th Wedding Anniversary.

We just received word that Jim Elton Ward has passed away after a long illness. Our condolences to Erika and her family. Please read a short story written by Don Teague about his friend, Elton Ward, on page 9.

Please keep on sending your stories, photos, and recipes for subsequent editions of this newsletter.

Wil Rodriguez, Newsletter Editor

New Dues are \$35.00 annually paid by December 31st to Terry Troy, 105 Huron Trail, Hertford, NC 27944

2015 Annual Meeting of the 601st&615th AC&WS Association - Charleston, SC

2015 Secretary Minutes:

The Annual Meeting of the 601st & 615th AC&WS Association took place on April 30, 2015 at 10:00 AM in the Hospitality Room of the Comfort Inn and Suites West of the Ashley in Charleston, SC.

The meeting was called to order by interim president Terry Troy punctually at 10:00 AM. The meeting started with a moment of silent prayer for our deceased and sick members and our troops, also with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Treasurer's Report:

The treasurer's report was presented by Howard Dickey with a written financial report. Report was seconded and accepted.

A discussion followed: Basically less money is taken in annually than distributed at the reunions. The membership is getting less and unless people attend the reunions, the dues are not paid.

One suggestion made by Francis Gosselin was, that people should pay an extra fee of \$15.00 to be reinstated. George Martin commented that we do not have a feeder program since the 601st&615th are closed units.

A Motion was raised to raise the dues to \$35.00 per year. The vote was taken by hand show of: 10 people voted for raising the dues to \$35.00 annually!

6 people voted to keep the dues at \$20.00!
The Motion carried and the dues for 1916 will be \$35.00, payable by January 31st.

Elections!!!

According to our By-Laws, the president is elected every year, if the position is vacated.

George Vitzthum was elected as our new president!

Howard Dickey resigned as treasurer and Fay Dickey resigned her positions as secretary and reunion coordinator. Positions are open to be filled!

LoAnne Zentner volunteered to fill the secretary position.

Dick Butler was appointed Vice President.

Terry Troy moved into the Treasury position.

Fay Dickey agreed to remain reunion coordinator with Renate Troy as her back-up.

Note:

Annual Dues of \$35.00 will have to be paid to Terry Troy by January 31st and the checks must be made out to Terry Troy or they cannot be cashed.

Physical Scrapbooks:

A discussion followed about scrapbooks and how cumbersome they are to take along to reunions. Willie Hanson, our web master offered to take them all home and pick out pictures for the web site he may wish to post.

New President: George Vitzthum:

At this point President George Vitzthum took over the meeting.

Choices for the 2016 Reunion Location were presented and voted as indicated:

Omaha, NE - 17
Fort Walton Beach, FL - 4
Niagara Falls - 2
Holland, MI - 2
St Louis, MO - 1
Cruise - 0

The group voted by ballot and decided that April 25-29, 2016 would be a good week to hold the reunion - give or take a week for better rates.

The motion carried to have Omaha, NE as the reunion site for 2016.

The date is April 25-29, 2016, depending on rates. The meeting adjourned at 11:28 AM

Fay Dickie, Association Secretary



The Battle of Palmdale

A tough but little known aerial battle during the Cold War

Submitted by
Dick Peiffer

On August 16, 1956, a tense but little known battle took place in the skies over Palmdale, California. History would remember it as The Battle of Palmdale.

The day began with NAS Point Mugu launching a Grumman, F6F-5K Hellcat drone, at 11:34 am, as a target for missile testing. The bright red drone headed for a test area out over the Pacific. As it began its westbound climb the Navy controllers quickly realized it was not responding. At first there was little concern, the pilotless Hellcat had thousands of square miles of ocean in which it would eventually crash. Then it made a graceful climbing left-hand turn back toward the coast. Now it was about to become a hazard, the Navy called nearby Oxnard AFB and the Air Force scrambled a pair of Northrop F-89D Scorpion fighters to make quick work of the errant aged prop fighter.

The F-89D was our Cold War approach to fight the Soviet bomber threat if they attacked our shores. The Scorpion with crew of two, pilot and radar observer was equipped with wingtip rocket pods that each contained 52 Mighty Mouse 2.75-inch rockets. Unlike today's missiles, the Mighty Mouse could not home-in on heat and had no precision guidance. The thinking was simply to overwhelm the Soviet bomber by sheer numbers. The idea - at least one of 104 rockets would hit the target.

The two fighters intercepted the wayward Hellcat at 30,000 feet about 30 miles northeast of Los Angeles. It flew over Fillmore and Frazier Park in gentle left turns as if it was sightseeing. The pilots agreed that as soon as it passed over an unpopulated area, they would begin their attack. Near Castaic a sparsely populated area, the crews began their runs, firing salvo after salvo. Each salvo missed and as the Hellcat meandered toward Palmdale, the two state-of-the-art interceptors fired their last salvo. The obsolete, unpiloted, unguided, unarmed, prop-driven drone evaded every rocket. A total of 208 rockets were fired and not a single hit.

Suddenly rockets began falling all over the countryside. One string lit fires near the Placerita Canyon oilfields igniting several oil sumps of the Indian Oil Company, and burned 100 acres of brush that threatened the nearby Bermite Powder Company explosives plant. Fires began near Soledad Canyon, consuming 350 acres of brush. It took 500 firefighters two days to bring all the brushfires under control.

Near Palmdale, two workers had parked their truck and were eating lunch in the shade of a nearby tree when one rocket tore into the truck. The explosion destroyed it. In downtown Palmdale, Edna Carlson was at home with her six-year-old son when one tore through her front window, ricocheted around the room, bounced off the ceiling, pierced a wall, and came to rest in a kitchen cupboard. Another ripped through J. R. Hingles' garage and home, nearly hitting Mrs. Lilly Willingham as she sat on the couch minding her own business. Larry Kempton, a young teenager, was driving on Palmdale Boulevard with his mother nervously watching every move her son made when a rocket exploded on the street directly in front of them. Fragments blew out the left front tire, tore holes in the radiator, hood and windshield. Mrs. Kempton nearly fainted.

Far above the red Hellcat passed over town when suddenly the engine sputtered and died as it ran out of fuel. It descended in a loose spiral toward an unpopulated patch of desert eight miles east of the Palmdale Airport. However, before impact, the drone sliced through a set of three power lines. The battle ended as the Hellcat smacked into the desert floor, cartwheeled and disintegrated. There was no fire.

The sheriff's demolition crew blew up rockets found near the Palmdale railroad tracks and Air Force demolition teams from Edwards AFB recovered more than a dozen unexploded rockets around Palmdale.

Thus, the Battle of Palmdale became but a small part of Cold War aviation history.



Sources: *Antelope Valley Press*, Jan. 18, 2004; by reporter Bob Wilson; *LA Times*, Sept. 11, 2005, *Santa Clarita Signal*, Aug 20, 2006; reporter John Boston.

Escape to the West!

Submitted by
Marika Aragon

The Berlin Wall was something of a propaganda disaster for the Soviet Union and East Germany. It allowed the communists to be tyrannical to the way they controlled the movements of their people and their willingness to shoot at people they considered to be traitors.

But all of the sudden, out of nowhere, a Berlin Wall was erected in the night of August 13th, 1961. Since it was a weekend and most Berliners slept, the East German government began to close the border with the West. In the early morning of that Sunday, most of the first work was done and the border to West Berlin was closed. The East Germans troops had begun to tear up streets and to install barbed wire entanglement and fences through Berlin.

The official figures show that at least 138 people died trying to cross the border.



Marika, Erika, and Richard

People attempting to get from East to West were regarded as traitors. And guards were instructed to shoot at them if they attempted to cross, although not to kill them.

When I was 15 years old, I crossed the East German border, legally, to be with my dad and my sister on vacation until the end of summer 1962. Since I came from West

Germany to East Germany, I was placed for four weeks in a political refuge camp to find out why I was returning to East Germany. My intentions were to stay one year with my father and sister. At the camp, I had to get political instructions and "political brainwashing".

During my visit, the wall was built and caught me in East Germany without means to get back to the West. Because of the lack of freedom afforded by the wall, I tried crossing the wall from East to West twice to go back to my mom without success. The first time, I was stopped by East Germans and the second time by Russians! But I was determined to get out of East Germany!

The third attempt was successful! It was very simple, scary, and fast. But I almost became another statistic, and, perhaps, would have caused an international crisis between the East and West Germany. I didn't know what to do; Gee, I was only 15 years old! My mother, brother, and other relatives were living in the West, and they wanted for me to come home. And I did too!

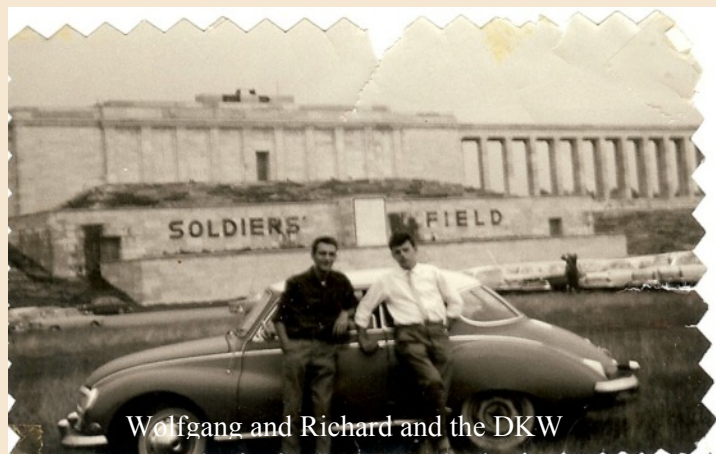
Not known by my relatives at the time my brother, Richard, and his friend, Wolfgang, both twenty years old, without sense at

all, created a scheme to get me out of East Germany. The scheme was to get me as close to the wall as they could, and from there, I was to walk to the West on my own! But how? At the border, my brother and his friend changed their minds and did not want me to continue on foot. And asked a truck driver take me out, but he refused. He told us that his company had an agreement with East Germany not to pick up system seekers because Berlin was in the middle of East Germany and could have created an international crisis. As the crisis developed, Richard and Wolfgang decided to smuggled me in the trunk of their DKW car, covered by smelly rags, tires, and tools! They placed me in the trunk of the DKW and on we went.

I was scared to death! I felt the short trip was the longest trip of my life! I kept on praying and praying not to be discovered!. If I would have been discovered, who knows what they would have done to me, my brother and his friend!

As we passed each check point, I was able to listen to the guards talking and it frightened me! At each check point, my prayers were faster and faster. And everything evil that would have happened to me was running throughout my mind and sweat drops running through my spine!

At the end of the of the last check point, already in West Germany, my brother began to tease me by removing the oily rags and grabbing my leg. It scared me as I thought it was one of the guards! The trucker we asked to help us, asked us whatever happened to the girl they were attempting to smuggle from East, and the guards came over from both sides to intervene. Since my West or East German citizenship needed to be confirmed, I was held in jail for 24 hours until my mother's



Wolfgang and Richard and the DKW

lawyer confirmed my nationality and got me out.

Once I was free, my brother, Wolfgang, and I went on our merry way to Hof, Germany, about 176 miles from Potsdam! I was finally home. I was finally free!

I believe that most of us do not know the actual price of freedom; I do!

Mrs. Aragon lives in Spanaway, Washington and married to Retired Army Sergeant First Class Rafael Aragon.

Ten Things That Will Disappear in Our Lifetime!

1.. The Post Office

Get ready to imagine a world without the post office.. They are so deeply in financial trouble that there is probably no way to sustain it long term. Email, Fed Ex, and UPS have just about wiped out the minimum revenue needed to keep the post office alive. Most of your mail every day is junk mail and bills.

2.. The Check

Britain is already laying the groundwork to do away with check by 2018. It costs the financial system billions of dollars a year to process checks. Plastic cards and online transactions will lead to the eventual demise of the check. This plays right into the death of the post office. If you never paid your bills by mail and never received them by mail, the post office would absolutely go out of business.

3.. The Newspaper

The younger generation simply doesn't read the newspaper. They certainly don't subscribe to a daily delivered print edition. That may go the way of the milkman and the laundry man. As for reading the paper online, get ready to pay for it. The rise in mobile Internet devices and e-readers has caused all the newspaper and magazine publishers to form an alliance. They have met with Apple, Amazon, and the major cell phone companies to develop a model for paid subscription services.

4.. The Book

You say you will never give up the physical book that you hold in our hand and turn the literal pages I said the same thing about downloading music from iTunes. I wanted my hard copy CD. But I quickly changed my mind when I discovered that I could get albums for half the price without ever leaving home to get the latest music. The same thing will happen with books. You can browse a bookstore online and even read a preview chapter before you buy. And the price is less than half that of a real book. And think of the convenience! Once you start flicking your fingers on the screen instead of the book, you find that you are lost in the story, can't wait to see what happens next, and you forget that you're holding a gadget instead of a book.

5. The Land Line Telephone

Unless you have a large family and make a lot of local calls, you don't need it anymore. Most people keep it simply because they've always had it. But you are paying double charges for that extra service. All the cell phone companies will let you call customers using the same cell provider for no charge against your minutes.

6.. Music

This is one of the saddest parts of the change story. The music industry is dying a slow death. Not just because of illegal downloading. It's the lack of innovative new music being given a chance to get to the people who would like to hear it. Greed and corruption is the problem. The record labels and the radio conglomerates are simply self-destructing. Over 40% of the music purchased today is "catalog items," meaning traditional

music that the public is familiar with. Older established artists. This is also true on the live concert circuit. To explore this fascinating and disturbing topic further, check out the book, "Appetite for Self-Destruction" by Steve Knopper, and the video documentary, "Before the Music Dies."

7.. Television Revenues

To the networks are down dramatically. Not just because of the economy. People are watching TV and movies streamed from their computers. And they're playing games and doing lots of other things that take up the time that used to be spent watching TV. Prime time shows have degenerated down to lower than the lowest common denominator. Cable rates are skyrocketing and commercials run about every 4 minutes and 30 seconds. I say good riddance to most of it. It's time for the cable companies to be put out of our misery. Let the people choose what they want to watch online and through Netflix.

8.. The "Things" That You Own

Many of the very possessions that we used to own are still in our lives, but we may not actually own them in the future. They may simply reside in "the cloud." Today your computer has a hard drive and you store your pictures, music, movies, and documents. Your software is on a CD or DVD, and you can always re-install it if need be. But all of that is changing. Apple, Microsoft, and Google are all finishing up their latest "cloud services." That means that when you turn on a computer, the Internet will be built into the operating system. So, Windows, Google, and the Mac OS will be tied straight into the Internet. If you click an icon, it will open something in the Internet cloud. If you save something, it will be saved to the cloud. And you may pay a monthly subscription fee to the cloud provider. In this virtual world, you can access your music or your books, or your whatever from any laptop or handheld device. That's the good news. But, will you actually own any of this "stuff" or will it all be able to disappear at any moment in a big "Poof?" Will most of the things in our lives be disposable and whimsical? It makes you want to run to the closet and pull out that photo album, grab a book from the shelf, or open up a CD case and pull out the insert.

9.. Joined Handwriting (Cursive Writing)

Already gone in some schools who no longer teach "joined handwriting" because nearly everything is done now on computers or keyboards of some type (pun not intended)

10. Privacy

If there ever was a concept that we can look back on nostalgically, it would be privacy. That's gone. It's been gone for a long time anyway. There are cameras on the street, in most of the buildings, and even built into your computer and cell phone. But you can be sure that 24/7, "They" know who you are and where you are, right down to the GPS coordinates, and the Google Street View. If you buy something, your habit is put into a zillion profiles, and your ads will change to reflect those habits. "They" will try to get you to buy something else. Again and again and again.

The Thrill of Shopping With A Woman....



Ann Margaret

During the war in Viet Nam in 1966, Richard, (my husband), never really talked a lot about his time in Viet Nam, other than he had been shot by a sniper. However, he had a rather grainy, 8 x 10 black and white photo he had taken at a USO show of Ann Margret with Bob Hope in the background that was one of his treasures.

A few years ago, Ann Margaret was doing a book signing at a local bookstore. Richard wanted to see if he could get her to sign the treasured photo so he arrived at the bookstore at 12 o'clock for the 7:30 signing.



When I got there after work, the line went all the way around the bookstore, circled the parking lot, and disappeared behind a parking garage.

Before her appearance, bookstore employees announced that she would sign

only her book and no memorabilia would be permitted.

Richard was disappointed, but wanted to show her the photo and let her know how much those shows meant to lonely GI's so far from home.. Ann Margaret came out looking as beautiful as ever and, as second in line, it was soon Richard's turn.

He presented the book for her signature and then took out the photo. When he did, there were many shouts from the employees that she would not sign it. Richard said, "I understand. I just wanted her to see it."

She took one look at the photo, tears welled up in her eyes and she said, "This is one of my gentlemen from Viet Nam and I most certainly will sign his photo. I know what these men did for their country and I always have time for 'my gentlemen.'"



With that, she pulled Richard across the table and planted a big kiss on him. She then made quite a to-do about the bravery of the young men she met over the years, how much she admired them, and how much she appreciated them. There weren't too many dry eyes among those close enough to hear. She then posed for pictures and acted as if he were the only one there.

That night was a turning point for him. He walked a little straighter and, for the first time in years, was proud to have been a Vet. I'll never forget Ann Margret for her graciousness and how much that small act of kindness meant to my husband.

Later at dinner, Richard was very quiet. When I asked if he'd like to talk about it, my big, strong husband broke down in tears.. "That's the first time anyone ever thanked me for my time in the Army," he said.



I now make it a point to say 'Thank you' to every person I come across who served in our Armed Forces.



***Congratulations to
Romy and Glen Griffitts, Roseville, CA, former
member of the 601th ACW, on their 55th
Wedding Anniversary! Married at the Rathaus
in Kassel, Germany in 1960.***

In Memoriam



Front: Elton Ward and Don Teague, in the background, at the 2009 Reunion

Jim Elton Ward (1934-2015)

In 1954, Jim and I were stationed at Rothwestern, Germany, at GunPost on Cocoa crew. Jim worked hard and tended to each one of his jobs very carefully. Never had a bad word for anyone or anything. Never complained about anything. One of a kind! After he fell in love with Erika, we did not see Jim much, only at work or crews cleaning up.

After many years of looking, Todd Appleton started the 601st reunions and names those found and addresses were printed. Contacted George Athey in Maryland, went to visit him. While there we drove to Connellsville, Penn to visit Jim Ward and Erika.. It was nice to see them after all the years. Lots of years had gone by and Jim looked and acted the same way. But Erika had changed his first name from Jim to Elton. That was hard for me to remember, for he had been Jim for many years. Connellsville has a street that runs down hill to the river, we drove up it but not down. We had a good visit and made plans to see one another at the reunions.

At the San Antonio reunion, we insisted they stop at our home in Texas for a visit. On our way, we stopped and admired the long horn cattle that was grazing. We were standing by the fence when I became aware of a fire ant bed, pointing it out and telling Jim not to step on them. He had not seen them before so they were a sight for him. We truly hated when they had to leave.

Jim was a history buff, his knowledge of event was without limits, he could tell you things about Texas that we did not know. Jim was also a super sports fan who knew the players by their names, where and how good they played.. Football was the best for him!

We all will and do miss Jim Elton Ward.

Donald Teague

50 Years of good service!

On August 14th, 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) signed into law the Social Security Act that today benefits over 58% of our citizens.

In our country, **Social Security** is primarily the **Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI)** federal program. The original act and the current version, as amended, encompass several social welfare and social insurance programs. Social Security is funded through payroll taxes called Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) or Self Employed Contributions Act Tax (SECA). Tax deposits are collected by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and are formally entrusted to the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund, the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund, the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund, or the Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance Trust Fund which make up the Social Security Trust Funds. With a few exceptions, all salaried income, up to an amount specifically determined by law has an FICA or SECA tax collected on it. All income over said amount is not taxed, for 2014 the maximum amount of taxable earnings is \$117,000.

With few exceptions, all legal residents working in the United States now have an individual Social Security number. Indeed, nearly all working (and many non-working) residents since Social Security's 1935 inception have had a Social Security number, because it is required to do a wide range of things including paying the IRS and getting a job.

In 2013, the total Social Security expenditures were \$1.3 trillion, 8.4% of the \$16.3 trillion GNP (2013) and 37% of the Federal expenditures of \$3.684 trillion. Income derived from Social Security is currently estimated to keep roughly 20% of all Americans, age 65 or older, above the Federally defined poverty level.

A limited form of the Social Security program began, during FDR's first term, as a measure to implement social insurance during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when poverty rates among senior citizens exceeded 50 percent. The Act was an attempt to limit unforeseen and unprepared for dangers in the modern life: including old age, disability, poverty, unemployment, and the burdens of widow(er)s with and without children.

Opponents, however, decried the proposal as socialism.

The provisions of Social Security have been changing since the 1930s shifting in response to economic worries as well as coverage for the poor, dependent children, spouses, survivors and the disabled. By 1950, debates moved away from which occupational groups should be included to get enough taxpayers to fund Social Security to how to provide more benefits. Changes in Social Security have reflected a balance between promoting "equality" and efforts to provide "adequate" and affordable protection for low wage workers.

The larger and better known programs under the Social Security Administration (SSA), are: **Federal Old-Age (Retirement)**, Survivors, and Disability Insurance; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Health Insurance for Aged and Disabled, (**Medicare**); Grants to States for Medical Assistance Programs for low income citizens; (**Medicaid**); State Children's Health Insurance Program for low income citizens; and **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**.

The largest component is the payment of **retirement benefits**. These retirement benefits are a form of social insurance that is heavily biased toward lower paid workers to make sure they do not have to retire in relative poverty. With few exceptions, throughout a worker's career, the Social Security Administration and the IRS keeps track of his or her earnings and requires federal Insurance Contribution Act, **FICA** or Self Employed Contribution Act, SECA, taxes to be paid on the earnings. The OASI accounts plus trust funds are the only Social Security funding source that brings in more than it sends out.



The amount of the monthly Social Security benefit to which a worker is entitled depends upon the earnings record they have paid FICA or SECA taxes on and upon the age at which the retiree chooses to begin receiving benefits.

Criticisms of Social Security claim that it discriminates against the poor and the middle class since they pay 12.4 percent, including a 6.2 percent employer contribution, on their wages. Supporters say that despite its regressive *tax formula*, its benefits are calculated using a progressive *benefit*

formula that replaces a much higher percentage of low-income workers' pre-retirement income than that of higher-income workers

On February 16, 2015, the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin reported that \$100 billion in Social Security payroll taxes is collected from illegal immigrants, even though few will ever be able to collect benefits.

In 1940, the first monthly benefit check was issued to Ida May Fuller for \$22.54!