

# **The Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association's First 30 Years A Snap-Shot History & Commentary**

**by AFPAAA Founder John G. Terino, Lt. Colonel USAF Retired**

## **Getting Started – The Lunch At Langley**

Before the Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association was formed there had been on and off talk for decades by active duty and former members of the Information/Public Affairs community (my memory goes back to the 1960s) of doing “something” that would keep those who had served in touch with each other. But it was only talk.

The closest to any sort of regularly-scheduled gathering that occurred was the Public Affairs reception/luncheon, hosted by the Air Force Association at its annual fall meeting in Washington D.C. That was where the AFA-sponsored Arno H. Leuhman scholarship – named for former Air Force Director of Information (1957-1962) Major General Arno H. Leuhman – was presented.

That all changed on July 23, 1993 when a Public Affairs Alumni Day was held at Langley AFB, Virginia. With Air Combat Command Director of Public Affairs, Colonel Mike Gallagher, and Colonel Ron Rand as hosts, about 50 retired Public Affairs Officers and NCOs attended. At lunch the retirees were challenged by Mike and Ron to do more than “something”.

They were asked to volunteer to establish an organization that would provide the means for all retirees from the Information/Public Affairs career field to link to each other. The volunteers would be sent letters assigning them to committees to put the new organization together with target dates for the tasks of each committee to be accomplished.

By the late summer of 1993 the volunteers had received letters with committee assignments.

## **The Touchdown Club & Fort Myer Meetings**

The first organizing committee, composed of Jim Reinhard, John Terino, and Dick Wood, met October 27, 1993 at the old Touchdown Club on 14<sup>th</sup> Street in D.C. Because he had a long commute, Dick dropped out prior to the second meeting and was replaced by Pete Alexandrakos.

The site of the third meeting shifted to the Fort Myer Officer's Club as the group expanded to tackle the tasks involved in establishing the organization.

Many contributed to the discussions. In addition to Reinhard, Terino, and Alexandrakos, the group included Hugh Burns, Neil Buttimer, John Gulick, Bob Hunter, Mike McRaney, Alice Price, Gene Sands, Dave Shea, Dave Schillerstrom, and a number of others.

## **Purpose & Membership**

The first, and most important issue was to determine what the organization was to be.

Discussions resulted in deciding we would be a fraternal, social organization that provided a means for former IO/PA enlisted, officer, and civilians to keep in touch. Our membership would be composed of retiree Full members with voting privileges who had served in Information and Public Affairs, including broadcasters. There would be a second category of Associate members for those on active duty without voting privileges. AFPAAA's by-laws were changed in 1996 to include bandsmen, and subsequently expanded to add visual information/Combat Camera to those in the original, traditional Public Affairs activities who were eligible.

We would be an organization specifically focused on IO/PA alumni. AFPAAA would not engage in lobbying, sell insurance, or in other activities that were common to the Air Force Association, AUSA, MOAA, etc. To become a viable, recognized legal entity we needed to take the necessary steps with the federal government to become a recognized veterans organization and to incorporate in a state.

## **The Name**

One of the lengthy discussions at the Fort Myer meetings involved what the organization's name would be. Air Force Public Affairs Association and Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association were the two top contenders from a number proposed.

Ultimately, the deciding factor was which name reflected what our purpose was and who we represented. As we were not going to be primarily for the active Air Force, using Air Force Public Affairs Association was considered misleading with a strong connotation of being an advocacy/lobbying group. Although lengthy, Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association (AFPAAA) was chosen because it clearly and accurately said who we were.

Once the name was decided, John Terino designed what became the trademarked logo for AFPAAA.



Three times since 1994 it has been proposed to change AFPAAA's name to Air Force Public Affairs Association. The major reason for the change was the hope that it would increase AFPAAA's appeal to the active duty force. In 2001, AFPAAA's Board of Directors voted 8-1 to change the name which would then require approval of the membership. The Board's action resulted in John Terino's resignation from the Board and as communications chairman/newsletter editor when the other members of the Board could not offer any concrete basis for the change. Al Eakle replaced him as editor and Joe Wojtecki assumed his Board seat and became communications chairman.

After his resignation Terino sent a personal letter to each member of AFPAAA explaining why he felt the name should not be changed. When AFPAAA's Board put the name change to a vote of

the members it was defeated by an almost 2-1 margin. In the fall of 2005 Terino returned to the Board as communications chairman/newsletter editor. He served in those posts until October 2022 when Dick Cole was appointed to those positions.

In 2003, a membership website survey asked if the issue of a name change should be reopened, 76.5% responded no.

Acting on a name change motion at the 2010 Annual Membership Meeting, Board Chair Christine Queen appointed President Bud Ross to head the 2010 Membership Development Committee to address the motion and other aspects of AFPAAA's membership. Ross was assisted by Neil Buttimer and Dave Shea.

The committee's report to the Board noted that nothing has shown that the word "Alumni" deters active duty members from joining AFPAAA. It also pointed out that a name change could cost between \$5,000-\$10,000 dollars. The Ross Committee recommended that the name Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association be kept ". . . as it correctly reflects the primary mission of the organization, avoids costs and because a change is unproven to add value to the organization." The recommendation was accepted.

In 2021-2022 the name change issue activated again with Jay DeFrank heading a committee to study the issue. The proposal is in the process of being brought before the entire AFPAAA membership for approval with a vote expected in late 2022 or early 2023.

## **Membership Certificate, Ranks**

We wanted a distinctive membership certificate and we got one thanks to the efforts of Alice Price, who had been responsible for the Air Force's art program, and John Gulick. Both were friends with noted aviation artist Keith Ferris and asked him to allow AFPAAA to use one of his works to be overprinted with our membership certificate. He agreed.

How we would handle the ranks people held on active duty who were now retired was another concern. We wanted AFPAAA to be informal. We did not want to appear to potential members as an "officers" organization even though we anticipated retired officers would most likely compose the bulk of the membership.

AFPAAA would be 'rankless'. That is clearly reflected in our newsletter where members' ranks are not used, the only exception being for individuals or Associate members who are still on active duty who are named in stories. Also, any member regardless of what rank or position they held on active duty could hold office or head a committee in AFPAAA. That concept has been successful in our first quarter century as four members former retired enlisted members – Dave Smith, Linda Arnold, and Judy Bevins – have been AFPAAA Board Chairmen.

To serve our membership well, which we felt was a key to succeeding, we would start with a limited slate of activities and do them well – a membership directory, a newsletter, and an annual meeting – to allow us the best chance of success. Our dues would be modest with Full members

at \$25 for one year, \$50 two years, \$300 lifetime, and Associate members at \$10 for one year and \$20 two years. Those dues were in place as this is written in 2022.

## **Getting The Word Out, Would Anyone Join?**

How successful would AFPAAA be? Most of those who helped form the organization thought we might get 150-200 members, provided we could let retired IOs and PAs know we existed.

The problem of communicating with those who had served had a two-fold solution. In March 1994, the organizing committee met at the Capital Hilton suite of Jim Hart, then Vice President of Public Affairs for PanEnergy Corporation (now Duke Energy). Jim's company would underwrite the solicitation mailing, as well as handle the printing and mailing of AFPAAA's newsletter and directory from 1994-1998.

The second part of the solution was a former PA mailing list from SAF/PA supplied by Larry Greer. Created by Jerry Dalton when he was SAF/PA director, it was initially maintained by his secretary, Olive Felty. Assistant SAF/PA director Tom Halbert then kept the list up-to date for many years. That list, thanks to Tom Halbert's effort, was the source of the highly successful initial recruiting effort that gave AFPAAA a strong membership base.

Membership chairman Neil Buttimer worked with Jim Hart to computerize the SAF/PA list and print the letter signed by Mike McRaney announcing the formation of the Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association and inviting the retirees to join. The letter was mailed in March 1994. The response was overwhelming. Within a month there were 156 members and by AFPAAA's First Annual Membership Meeting in San Antonio in June 1994 the number had reached 378 (peak memberships, including Full and Associates, was 662 in 2000) and AFPAAA was on its way.

## **AFPAAA Takes Shape - Legal Steps & The First Board Of Directors**

The last three months of 1993 and the spring of 1994 were very busy with a flurry of meetings and actions that shaped AFPAAA.

December 1993 saw the appointment of AFPAAA's first Board of Directors from the group participating in the Fort Myer meetings. Mike McRaney was named chairman and president; Dave Shea, vice president; John Terino, secretary, and Pete Alexandrakos, treasurer. In addition, Neil Buttimer, Jim Hart, and John Terino were appointed to head the membership, publications, and communications committees. Subsequent Boards have been elected by the membership.

Pete Alexandrakos consulted an attorney and a CPA on the best way to legally put the organization together. They recommended we form a non-stock, not-for-profit corporation and then seek tax-exempt status from the IRS.

Ted Daniel played a major role in producing the documents that formed the Association. He provided a copy of the by-laws of the broadcasters' association which AFPAAA's by-laws are based upon.

The attorney, based on our newly drafted by-laws, prepared Articles of Incorporation that included our name, purposes, classes of membership, and how the Board of Directors would be elected. Those articles were filed with the Virginia State Corporation Commission and in mid-December 1993 AFPAAA received its Certificate of Incorporation. Virginia law requires an entity incorporated in the state to continuously maintain in the Commonwealth a registered office and a registered agent. AFPAAA's Virginia agent must be a resident of Virginia and either a member of the Virginia State Bar or a member of the Associations' Board of Directors

Once incorporated AFPAAA's treasurer, Pete Alexandrakos, and secretary, John Terino, went to the Bank of America in Fairfax, Virginia, to open the Association's checking account. Each provided a personal check for \$300 and became the first dues-paying and Lifetime Founder Members of the Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association.

The next step was obtaining tax-exempt status from the IRS. It took a bit more time, but on April 26, 1994 the IRS granted AFPAAA tax-exempt veterans organization status under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code. IRS also gave us the authority to receive tax-deductible donations as charitable contributions. This status is critical to AFPAAA's finances. It saves payment of federal taxes and lets AFPAAA receive cash and in-kind donations it might not otherwise receive from corporations and individuals.

In addition to establishing a Board, it was clear that a planning function was needed to help shape and direct AFPAAA. Dave Schillerstrom was named head of the Development and Strategic Planning Committee and tasked with presenting a long-term plan to the Board prior to the Annual Membership Meeting in June 1995 at Colorado Springs, Colorado. A large number of members assisted Schillerstrom. The Committee's work and the Board's responses to it were presented to the membership (see Summer 1995 News & Notes for full details).

The most important action taken by the Board from the Committee's work was to answer the question "What does the membership want the Association to be in the future and how do we find that out?" The Board decided AFPAAA would need a membership survey for the answers.

Jim Hart, through PanEnergy Corporation, was able to provide Gelb Consulting Group, Houston, Texas, to conduct the survey and analyze the data gathered. The early 1995 survey of 337 members showed 97% said AFPAAA's linking "with past and present, retired and active" colleagues was important to them with 60% saying it should be our top priority. It also showed that 82% thought the membership benefits and service offered were "about right".

Four suggestions came from the survey: schedule annual meetings in the second or third quarter of the year; establish an assistance program for widows/widowers; sell AFPAAA merchandise to get funds, and sponsor regional activities. Two were adopted by the Board, the scheduling and merchandise. The widows/widowers assistance was rejected because other veterans groups were better equipped to handle and had established programs for that. With no volunteers to plan, coordinate, and conduct them, regional activities were rejected.

## **Annual Membership Meetings**

One of the pillars of AFPAAA is the Annual Membership Meeting which provides an opportunity for old friends and spouses to socialized, get updates on what is happening in the Air Force and Public Affairs in particular, visit current military activities and historic sites, honor supporters of the Air Force, and present the Air Force Best of the Best Award and AFPAAA's Brigadier General Mike McRaney Award. Over the years it has evolved from a relatively modest beginning to its current format, both in terms of content and facilities used.

Our first gathering was Thursday–Saturday, June 9 through 11, 1994, in San Antonio, Texas, with on-site chairman Doran Hopkins doing an outstanding job putting it together. The festivities opened Thursday at our headquarters, the Ramada Airport Motel, with a no-host ice-breaker in the bar. Friday the 80 members attending were greeted and briefed at Randolph AFB by General Henry Viccellio, Jr., Commander of Air Education and Training Command (AETC). Colonel Johnny Whitaker, AETC Director of Public Affairs and Colonel Ted Tilma, Commander of the Air Force News Center (AFNEWS) and members of their staffs covered their activities. Briefings on retiree issues such as the commissary, BX, and medical care were heard.

That afternoon we toured AFNEWS' ultra modern print and electronic media facility. Dinner was an informal BBQ at the Diamond-W Ranch. The membership meeting was on Saturday with a number of motions made and passed (see minutes of meeting or Summer-Fall '94 AFPAAA News & Notes). Jerry Dalton's panel 'Employment After the Air Force' ended the meeting program. The registration fee for San Antonio in 1984, including lunch at Randolph and the BBQ dinner, was \$75, and the Ramada room rate, including breakfast, was \$59 per night. In 2019, for Charleston, South Carolina, registration, including 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 receptions, and a banquet dinner was \$200, and the rooms at the North Charleston Marriott were \$154+tax per night.

The Second Annual Membership Meeting in Colorado Springs, Colorado, June 15-18, 1995 saw our headquarters at the full-service Marriott Colorado Springs Hotel. The format was similar to San Antonio's, a tour, luncheon, and briefings at the Air Force Academy on Friday, and the membership meeting on Saturday morning.

With 1995 the 50th Anniversary of the end of World War II, dinner Friday evening at the Colorado Fine Arts Center honored AFPAAA members who served and contributed to victory. A special booklet, which can be read/downloaded at [afpaaa.org](http://afpaaa.org), featuring members experiences in their own words was prepared by John Terino for the dinner.

The Annual Membership Meeting went smoothly for the next three years but in 1999 there was a major problem. That year Satellite Beach, Florida, was chosen to take advantage of visiting NASA facilities and Patrick Air Force Base and we appointed an on-site chairman to put the meeting together. The success of AFPAAA's Annual Membership Meetings depends primarily on the on-site chairman. The Satellite Beach on-site chairman thought he had the preparations under control and on schedule. Approximately two months prior to the event during a conference call with the Board it became clear when the on-site chairman was asked for specific details that

virtually nothing had been done.

Following the call, the Board decided a replacement was needed immediately. Fortunately Don Gilleland, who lived in the area, agreed to step in. Months of prep time had been time lost but he pulled it together and we had a successful meeting.

A comprehensive *'Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association Annual Membership Meeting Information & Checklist For Meeting & On-Site Chairmen'* was prepared by AFPAAA Vice President Dave Shea and Communications Chairman John Terino to guide those doing the day-to-day meeting tasks by ensuring they are aware of what and when things need to be done to preclude as much as possible something falling through the cracks.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Korean conflict was in 2000. AFPAAA saluted its members who had participated at dinner on the Queen Mary during the Seventh Annual Membership Meeting, June 15-17, in Long Beach, California. A booklet, which can be read/downloaded at [afpaaa.org](http://afpaaa.org), was prepared by John Terino of remembrances from members who served during the Korean War.



**AFPAAA Members  
Remember . . .**



The Annual Membership Meeting's format has evolved to a two-and-a-half day (mid-day Thursday through Saturday evening) event that begins when registration opens at noon and is followed by an informal ice-breaker reception on Thursday evening.

Friday is a day of tours of military activities, defense contractors, and military/national historic sites available in the area where the meeting is held. Friday also includes the President's Luncheon where President's Award plaques that have a small, red piece of the Cape Canaveral gantry used for the January 31, 1958 launch of Explorer One, America's first satellite, are presented to persons who have significantly impacted Air Force Public Affairs.

Saturday is the busiest day of the meeting. The morning is devoted to 'Re-Bluing' briefings on current Air Force and military programs and activities. The Director's Luncheon follows with the SAF/PA Director bringing our membership up to date on Air Force Public Affairs activities and

challenges. The afternoon is devoted to AFPAAA's general membership meeting where Board members and committee chairmen deliver reports, and members have the opportunity to ask questions and present motions.

On Saturday evening each Annual Membership Meeting concludes with a reception and awards banquet where the Brigadier General James W. Hart, Jr. Best of the Best Award is presented to SAF/PA's selected top performer in Air Force Public Affairs, and the Brigadier General Mike McRaney Distinguished Service Award is presented to an AFPAAA member who has performed exceptional service for the Association.

Funding for the meeting was initially covered by registration fees and corporate sponsorships that in some years even produced a surplus that was added to AFPAAA's Endowment Fund. In recent years, as corporate support has diminished and meeting costs have risen, there have not been surpluses. The meeting is no longer self-sustaining and AFPAAA now uses revenue from the Endowment Fund to cover meeting cost deficits.

#### **AFPAAA Annual Membership Meetings**

1994	June 9-12	San Antonio, Texas	2010	April 22-24	Orlando, Florida
1995	June 15-18	Colorado Springs, Colorado	2011	May 12-14	Fairfield, California
1996	July 11-14	Hampton, Virginia	2012	May 3-5	St. Louis, Missouri
1997	April 22-26	Las Vegas, Nevada	2013	April 25-28	Las Vegas, Nevada
1998	June 25-27	Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio	2014	May 8-10	San Antonio, Texas
1999	April 29-May 1	Satellite Beach, Florida	2015	May 14-16	Tysons Corner, Virginia
2000	June 15-17	Long Beach, California	2016	May 12-14	Colorado Springs, Colorado
2001	April 19-21	Alexandria, Virginia	2017	April 2-30	Destin, Florida
2002	May 30-June 2	San Antonio, Texas	2018	May 31-Jun 2	San Diego, California
2003	May 1-3	Las Vegas, Nevada	2019	April 2 -27	N. Charleston, South Carolina
2004	April 29-May 2	Destin, Florida	2020		Cancelled - COVID-19 Pandemic
2005	June 16-18	Tacoma, Washington	2021		Cancelled - COVID-19 Pandemic
2006	May 4-7	Baltimore, Maryland	2022		Cancelled - COVID-19 Pandemic
2007	May 3-5	Colorado Springs, Colorado			
2008	May 15-17	San Antonio, Texas			
2009	April 30-May 1	Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio			

#### **COVID-19 Pandemic Cancels 2020-2022 Annual Membership Meetings**

In early 2020 the world-wide Covid 19 pandemic brought drastic changes to activities throughout America. Large and small gatherings, from schools, church groups, and major athletic events to restaurants, social and civic clubs, as well mass transit were shut down or restricted in attendance, and military installations virtually closed to the public. It was not possible for AFPAAA to hold its Annual Membership Meeting for three years, 2020-22. With the nation mostly returning to normalcy in 2022, holding a meeting in late 2023 seemed a possibility.

#### **Endowment \$300,000**

One of the most important actions that ensured AFPAAA's success occurred on November 3, 1997 when a long-term financial plan developed by Jim Hart, Dave Schillerstrom, and John

Gulick of the Development and Strategic Planning Committee was adopted unanimously by the Board.

With annual operating expenses expected to exceed \$15,000 a means to assure adequate funding to meet those expenses and continue the high quality of services and activities that AFPAAA had established was needed. The plan proposed a number of ways to do that. The most important proposal was to establish an endowment fund.

With a goal of \$300,000, AFPAAA's drive to provide a firm financial base for the future of the Association kicked-off at the Annual Membership Meeting dinner in the Air Force Museum, June 26, 1998. It was announced that Endowment \$300,000 had received more than \$41,900.

The \$300,000 goal was set based on the need to have an income from the fund to cover AFPAAA's projected expenses. A conservative five-percent return on a fully funded endowment would provide the required \$15,000.

The Endowment \$300,000 funds were initially invested with Wheat First Securities. Later, the Finance Committee, headed by Jim Hart along with Hank Hufnagel and Jim McGuire, moved the fund to MWT Investments. The endowment is totally separate from AFPAAA's checking account, which is used to pay bills as they come in, and laddered certificates of deposit that are our general account that provides the funds as needed replenish the checking account.

With cash and other donations including stocks from members, and the Annual Membership Meeting Centurion room drawings, Endowment \$300,000 has far surpassed its goal. With more than \$500,000, it is now simply the AFPAAA endowment fund.

## **Supporting The Active Air Force**

As a veterans organization AFPAAA has and continues to fulfill the requirement "to sponsor or participate in activities of a patriotic nature" in a number of ways with the active duty Air Force, including:

**The Brigadier General James W. Hart, Jr. Best of the Best Award** – In 1994, when SAF/PA selected Senior Airman James H. Cunningham III for the first Best of the Best Award, AFPAAA created the master trophy maintained at the Pentagon and each year provides the individual winner's trophy. In 2017, the AFPAAA Board and SAF/PA agreed that AFPAAA Lifetime Founder Brigadier General James Hart's distinguished career in Air Force Public Affairs, as well as his parallel civilian public relations career, deserved renaming the award in his honor. In October 2017 AFPAAA presented a perpetual plaque of Best of the Best winners that hangs in the SAF/PA conference room. We have added to the award over the years. In addition to the trophy, the recipient now receives a \$1,000 stipend and an AFPAAA Life membership, as well as free registration, transportation, and lodging for the presentation at the Annual Membership Meeting. The award is supported by Lockheed-Martin. Best of the Best Award winners:

1994 SrA James H. Cunningham III  
1995 Capt Brett E. Morris  
1996 Capt Michael J. Paoli  
1997 SSgt Anthony Jacob  
1998 SSgt William M. Hickman, Jr.  
1999 Major Frank Smolinsky  
2000 Capt John S. Haynes  
2001 MSgt Kenneth E. Fidler  
2002 Lt Col Stephen D. Clutter  
2003 Lt Col Jon K. Anderson  
2004 Lt Col Roger S. Murray  
2005 SMSgt Stefan Alford  
2006 TSgt Tara A. O'Brien  
2007 Lt Col John L. Thomas  
2008 TSgt Sean M. Worrell

2009 Capt Joseph A. Coslett  
2010 SSgt Julianne M. Showalter  
2011 Capt Belena S. Marquez  
2012 SMSgt Timothy W. Cook  
2013 SSgt Roidan A. Carlson  
2014 Ms. Ann M. Stefanek  
2015 Mr. Andy Roake  
2016 Major Bryan Bouchard  
2017 SrA Nicolas Myers  
2018 MSgt David L. Salanitri  
2019 TSgt Laura J. Beckley  
2020 A1C Rebeckah Medeiros  
2021 Jennifer Green-Lanchoney

**DINFOS Badges** – Following a suggestion from then SAF/PA Director Ron Rand at the Annual Membership Meeting in 1998, AFPAAA funds career specialty badges for all Air Force graduates from the basic courses at the Defense Information School, Fort Meade, Maryland.

**Brigadier General H. J. Dalton SAF/PA Conference Room** – In 2017 AFPAAA provided \$3,255 to help in the construction of SAF/PA's new conference room which was part of a larger renovation project that consolidated SAF/PAs offices in one area off the E-Ring on the fourth floor. In 2019 we presented a perpetual plaque for the conference room that recognizes enlisted members of the Public Affairs community who have been selected as Outstanding Airmen of the Year by the Air Force Association. On July 11<sup>th</sup> 2019 the conference room was named to honor the first Public Affairs officer to head Air Force Public Affairs, Brigadier General H. J. 'Jerry' Dalton. AFPAAA provided the hallway plaque that identifies the room and biographical and picture plaques of General Dalton inside the room.

**Professional Credentials** – In 1997 AFPAAA offered ten \$100 grants to active duty and civilian AFPAAA members to help pay part of the fee for accreditation from either the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) or the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) members.

**Air Force Public Affairs Hall of Fame** – In 2019 AFPAAA, in coordination with SAF/PA and the Defense Information School (DINFOS), began the process of funding and establishing an Air Force Public Affairs Hall of Fame at the DINFOS Fort Meade complex. The effort was spearheaded by Art Forster. In mid-2021 the "Pioneer" class of 15 inductees was announced. It was composed of General Hap Arnold, Brigadier General Jerry Dalton, the first career public affairs officer to be Air Force Director of Public Affairs; Lieutenant Colonel Bill Greener, the former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs; Ken Hackman, the 'Godfather' of Air Force visual information; Lieutenant Colonel Alf Heiberg, from 1941 to 1944 the first leader of the Army Air Forces Band; Stephen Leo, the first Air Force Chief of Public Relations, and Chief Master Sergeant Chuck Lucas, editor of the Military Airlift Command and later the Air Force News Services from 1964 to 1972. Also, in the initial inductees were Colonel Bill McGinty, who

led Air Force public affairs operations in Vietnam and Far East Air Forces; Chief Master Sergeant Doug Morrell, who was in three wars as a combat camera cinematographer; Brigadier General William Nuckols, who headed public affairs for the World War II Allied Expeditionary Air Forces, and Colonel Barney Oldfield, who was in charge of press operations for General Eisenhower and Field Marshal Montgomery during World War II. Completing the group were Alice Price, the first civilian to be named Chief of the Air Force Arts and Museum Branch in the Pentagon; Buzz Rizer, a retired lieutenant colonel and the longtime Director of the American Forces Information Service; Reed Switzer, the first Public Affairs NCO promoted to both Senior Master Sergeant and Chief Master Sergeant, and Colonel Reade Tilley, who directed Air Force Public Affairs during the Berlin Airlift and later for Strategic Air Command. A full listing and backgrounds of the initial and subsequent inductees, as well as the nomination procedure is on the AFPAAA website [www.afpaaa.org](http://www.afpaaa.org)

**Dalton Scholarship Program** – Established in 2020 with the first awards to be made in 2022 the program provides \$5,000 each year for individual awards of up to \$1,000 to those serving in the Band, Broadcasting, Visual Information/Combat Camera, and traditional Public Affairs specialties to advance their skills and enhance their duty performance to benefit the Air Force. The awards may be used for courses, seminars, and workshops from colleges, universities, and professional institutes and organizations.

## **Two Internet Sites**

John Gura convinced the Board to give the internet a six-month trial in 1997 and AFPAAA established a website to keep members better informed of our activities and a means to access services we provide them. The trial proved highly successful, the site was never shutdown, and, with improvements over the years, [www.afpaaa.org](http://www.afpaaa.org) is still online. It is AFPAAA's official website where anyone, members and non-members can find a wealth of information, including our purpose, who can join, dues, a membership application, and links to Air Force sites.

Thanks to Sam Giammo, an informal AFPAAA Facebook page that complements the official website was established in 2012. By going to [www.facebook.com/groups/273635106035075](https://www.facebook.com/groups/273635106035075) members can communicate with each other. It provides a place to exchange information, engage in fresh, lively discussions, and post pictures. In addition, it is linked to other related pages.

## **Oral History Project**

From a motion at the First Annual Membership Meeting in June, John Gura began AFPAAA's Oral History Project on September 12, 1994, using the standards recommended by the USAF Oral History Program and the national Oral History Association. With the goal to preserve first-person accounts of Public Affairs events and activities from participants, AFPAAA's collection is a record that presents a unique perspective on the Air Force and the role of USAF Public Affairs activities for public affairs and public relations practitioners, students, researchers, authors, historians and journalists. Gura has conducted most of the interviews to date with a number done by John Terino. The Air Force Association's Aerospace Education Foundation helped fund the project with a \$1,000 grant in 1995. AFPAAA has provided its oral history collection to :

- Secretary of the

Air Force, Public Affairs (SAF/PA), Pentagon, Wash DC  
Oral History Program, Maxwell AFB, Alabama  
Information School, Ft. Meade, Maryland  
States Air Force Academy Library, Colorado Springs, Colorado  
Public Relations Society of America

• Air University  
• Defense  
• United  
• The  
and the

collection is accessible via the internet at AFPAAA's website [www.afpaaa.org](http://www.afpaaa.org)

## **McRaney Award**

In 2000 the Board Established the AFPAAA Distinguished Service Award to recognize any member for contributions to AFPAAA that go far beyond what normally might be expected. Recipients of the award are determined by unanimous vote of the Board of Directors.

The first recipient was Michael P. McRaney who was AFPAAA chairman and president for the six years since its founding. Jim Hart, Mike's successor as Board chairman, presented the award at the Seventh Annual Membership Meeting in Long Beach, California, June 17, 2000.

"Mike's efforts, along with those of the other members of the organizing committee who shared the vision of what AFPAAA ought to be, made us what we are today," Hart said, noting the growth from the six member committee to 662 members. "He put in many hours behind the scenes that enabled AFPAAA to succeed; we wouldn't be here tonight if he had not given so much of himself to this organization."

His contributions to founding AFPAAA were recognized further when the Board determined that the award would be renamed the Brigadier General Mike McRaney Distinguished Service Award. Recipients of the McRaney Award have been:

**2001 – Pete Alexandrakos**

**2002 – Alice Price**

**2003 – Neil Buttimer**

**2004 – David Shea**

**2005 – John Gura**

**2006 – David Schillerstron**

**2007 – Joe Purka**

**2008 – John Terino**

**2009 – Linda Arnold**

**2010 – Ron Rand**

**2011 – David Smith**

**2012 – Sam Giammo**

**2013 – Hal Smarkola**

**2014 – Bud Ross**

**2015 – Jim McGuire & Hank Hufnagel**

**2016 – Mark Foutch**

**2017 – Jim Hart**

**2018 – Phil Ratliff**

**2019 – Judy Bivens**

## **AFPAAA Takes A Stand: The Enola Gay**

The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum planned an exhibit for display of the World War II B-29 Superfortress bomber Enola Gay which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. In early 1994, when the Smithsonian sent the proposed text that would be part of the display to veterans groups and scholars throughout the country for comments it produced a firestorm of protests. A large number of the groups viewed it as inaccurate, revisionist with racist overtones, and inappropriate in its presentations of America and Japan. They contended the script required extensive corrections and rewriting before the display was opened.

The Washington Post summed up the crux of the controversy on February 1, 1995 *“It is important to be clear about what happened at the Smithsonian. It is not, as some have it, that benighted advocates of a special interest or right-wing point of view brought historical power to bear to crush and distort the historical truth. Quite to the contrary. Narrow-minded representatives of a special-interest and revisionist point of view attempted to use their inside track to appropriate and hollow out a historical event that large numbers of Americans alive at that time and engaged in the war had witnessed and understood in a very different — and authentic — way.”*

Breaking with its policy of not becoming involved in lobbying of any form, or taking sides in political activities or public controversies, AFPAAA weighed in with a letter to the museum director, Dr. Martin Harwit, from Board Chairman and President Mike McRaney. The letter agreed the Enola Gay should be displayed but should not “. . . be used to express an obvious biased viewpoint that can hardly be substantiated in facts.” It went on to say *“Portraying Japan as an oppressed victim is absolutely ridiculous, misguided and an insult to those who gave their lives to preserve our freedom. . . . If the Smithsonian institution were less interested in being politically correct and more interested in developing historically correct displays throughout all its museums, the tax paying public would be better served.”* The letter closed *“Display the Enola Gay and state what it did accurately. That is all that is necessary.”*

The individual and veterans groups’ protests were effective. In January 1965, the new Secretary of the Smithsonian, Michael Heyman, ordered a less controversial exhibit. Dr. Harwit resigned from the Air and Space Museum that May. Today the Enola Gay is displayed at the National Air and Space Museum Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center adjacent to Dulles Airport.

## **From SAF/PA To ASD/PA**

In May 2020 career Public Affairs Officer Brigadier General Patrick S. Ryder was named SAF/PA Director and on August 4, 2022 moved to the Department of Defense as its spokesman. He joins retired Air Force PAOs Bill Greener and Mike Burch who have filled that position; unlike them he is serving while still on active duty.

## **The 2020 Initiative: Evaluating The Past While Considering Options For The Future**

In 2017 Judy Bivens spearheaded the 20/20 Initiative which is developing a road map for AFPAAA's continued success. She established committees for a long term, comprehensive review of how AFPAAA operates and how we might best position our association for the future focusing on finance, operations, membership, and our annual meeting that are now reviewing each area to improve their current policies and procedures. The initial leaders in each area were Phil Ratliff, finance; Tom Dolney, operations; Connie Custer, membership, and John Gura, annual meeting. Work is continuing in all areas with Jay DeFrank replacing Connie Custer.

Life Member and expert public opinion researcher Dr. Steve Everett conducted a survey of members in late 2018 as the first step in what needed to be done to enhance the membership experience and to ensure that AFPAAA continues to attract new member. Almost fifty percent of our members replied – a phenomenal response that provided excellent insights into what AFPAAA is doing right and what we may be able to do to improve and do better. Simultaneously, they have been working with SAF/PA to get the active force's views of AFPAAA and what would make it attractive for those on active duty to consider joining.

## **Why AFPAAA Succeeded, Will That Continue?**

There have been three key components in AFPAAA's successful formation and sustainment for 25 years: the members; the fiscally conservative policy of the AFPAAA Board, the Finance Committee and the handling of the funds by our three treasurers – Pete Alexandrakos – 1993 to 2001, Jim Hart – 2001 to 2016 and Phil Rathliff – 2016 to present; and a core of volunteers. What must be realized is that these components may not be the same in AFPAAA's second quarter-century.

When first formed there were no funds and AFPAAA faced considerable founding and operating expenses. Initially it was thought that membership dues – \$25/1year, \$50/3yrs, \$300/Lifetime Founder – could cover operating expenses and the Annual Membership Meeting would be a pay-as-you-go self-sustaining operations. While those assumptions were valid in 1993 they did not remain that way and are not now.

Four months after the initial solicitation letter, at the First Annual Membership Meeting in June 1994, with 378 dues paying members, we had a surplus with \$20,605 received and \$2,305.80 in expenses. This did not address the meeting expenses which were covered separately by registration fees.

By the 1995 meeting membership had reached 504. AFPAAA's expenses were covered with a balance of \$30,310.66 remaining. A major portion of that surplus was generated from the 62 Lifetime Founder and Lifetime Members who joined. At that time \$25,000 of the surplus was invested in certificates of deposit.

Two things, besides regular and lifetime membership dues, aided AFPAAA's finances to have a surplus: printing, mailing, survey sponsorship, trademark registration, and other expenses were underwritten from 1994-1998 by PanEnergy Corporation/Duke Energy through Jim Hart, and annual corporate support of the Annual Membership Meeting which was averaging \$20,000.

By 2000 AFPAAA had 662 members. But there were problems coming.

Efforts to increase membership by several Board chairmen, presidents, and Joe Purka, who heads AFPAAA membership development met with marginal success. Despite offering free trial memberships of up to two years to specifically targeted groups, such as members of the Guard and Reserve, as well as all those on active duty, response was sparse. Of those who accepted trial memberships, virtually none renewed when the trial was up and conversion to paying status required to stay a member. The AFPAAA's peak membership figure is not as gaudy when it is realized that it contains freebies.

Adding to our retiree members has not been much more successful despite several 'gift a friend with an AFPAAA membership' and 'every member get a member' campaigns aimed at our members reaching out to people they know.

Contacting a retiree to offer them an opportunity to join is now more difficult than when we used the list from SAF/PA to get started in 1994 and a major impediment to adding to AFPAAA's membership. Attempts to get names and addresses for impending or recent retirees from the Air Force have been thwarted by privacy laws that are now strictly enforced. Similarly, efforts to obtain permission to survey active duty Public Affairs personnel to determine what their attitudes are toward AFPAAA are and what could be done to make joining more attractive, have been blocked.

In addition, with the shrinking of Air Force personnel strength from the large force of the Vietnam era to today's force, the pool of potential members of those retiring from Public Affairs for AFPAAA to recruit from has shrunk dramatically. That smaller pool portends that without vigorous and successful recruiting efforts the size of our membership base will shrink in the future and in the long-term potentially jeopardize AFPAAA's continued existence

Despite that the Public Affairs tent now includes broadcasters, bands, and visual information/Combat Camera, attempts to gain members, either retirees or active duty, from those career fields have not been successful as they have their own active/retiree organizations.

The stream of dues from members has changed and diminished in recent years. To some extent that is AFPAAA's responsibility. With our membership total now in the 400 range, the number of renewal dollars we receive is substantially reduced when the Lifetime Members who pay no renewal dues are considered.

While dues have not been raised since AFPAAA's founding, with our Lifetime Members and a shrinking membership base, even a substantial dues increase would not generate a significant increase in income to provide an annual stream that would cover operating expenses.

Funding the Annual Membership Meeting is another area of concern. In recent years, the meeting registration fee and corporate sponsorship monies have not covered costs and the deficits, running into thousands of dollars, have required using revenue generated by the Endowment Fund.

What has really made AFPAAA a success has been a relatively small group of volunteers who put the Association together and have sustained it. Mike McRaney was Board chairman and President for the first six years, Jim Hart was treasurer for 17 years, John Gura ran the website for 26 years until replaced by Jim McGuire in 2020 and he continues to run the Oral History Project he initiated, Neil Buttimer handled the membership and the directory for 25 years until supplanted by Christine Queen, John Terino was communications chairman/newsletter editor for 25 years until Dick Cole took those posts, John also served as AFPAAA's secretary for the first five years, and there were many others who gave large amounts of their time and skills to AFPAAA. Everything those people did was free, it didn't cost AFPAAA anything.

While the transition of leadership among AFPAAA officers – Board Chairman, President, Vice President, and Secretary – has gone smoothly thanks to the leadership succession plan that has each officer hold every position for one year starting with secretary, transitioning of positions that require long-term commitments – treasurer, membership, website, oral history, communications/newsletter editor – has not gone smoothly. It took Jim Hart a decade before Phil Ratliff stepped in; Neil Buttimer had wished to step down for several years before Christine Queen agreed to take over membership.

The problem of replacing the volunteers involves age, willingness, skill, and money. Gura and Terino were in their 80s after more than a decade of searching before they were replaced.

While all those who have served and are serving in the five positions are unpaid, if those tasks are going to be done in the future and volunteers from within AFPAAA can't be found they will have to be contracted out at considerable cost that could easily run into tens of thousands of dollars per year. Even if the functions are contracted there is a catch. In each instance AFPAAA would have to have a person or persons willing to supply information to and oversee the contractor. Finding from among the membership willing and competent persons to put the effort and time in to be an overseer may be almost as difficult as finding someone to actually do those tasks has been up to now.

The Endowment Fund provides AFPAAA a strong financial base. The Annual Membership Meeting deficits warrant that serious consideration be given to controlling and where possible reducing meeting costs while still having a quality gathering. Similarly, whether to contract out all or even some of the services now done by volunteers and the costs in doing that needs to be carefully evaluated before adoption. Failure carefully to address the cost of contacting before committing to it could substantially impact the Endowment Fund.

In terms of membership, unless an effective recruiting effort of nonmember current and future retirees is made, membership is likely to continue to decline, ultimately calling into question whether AFPAAA can continue to exist.

The name change proposal mentioned at the start of this narrative, which will be acted upon in the months to come, is important. Depending on how the membership votes AFPAAA could change dramatically in terms of name, membership, and purpose.

As it begins its fourth decade, the above challenges are clear, and others are sure to arise. AFPAAA needs to do what is necessary to stay financially viable while still offering a quality membership experience.

John Terino  
AFPAAA Lifetime Founder  
September 2022