

Geodetic Survey Squadron/Group, Newsletter #33, May 2014

Greetings, Fellow Veterans of the Geodetic Survey Squadron and Geodetic Survey Group!

Let us remember our fellow veterans who have gone before us on this Memorial Day Weekend!

Although most of America treats Memorial Day as the official kickoff for summer fun, it is worth pausing to recall that our freedom to enjoy these fun moments came at a price. Freedom isn't free. Just gaze at the vast gardens of stone spread out in all directions at any national cemetery and give thanks to all who now reside there for "paying it forward."

See https://www.google.com/search?q=pictures+of+arlington+national+cemetery+on+memorial+day&client=safari&rls=en&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=h5x_U6XA_NqjQsQTd7YCQAw&ved=0CCoQsAQ&biw=1680&bih=837

and

<http://www.talkingproud.us/PhotoGallery/page102/PhotoGalleryMourn.html>

Deceased GSS Veterans

We have no new names to add to our roll of deceased Squadron veterans this time, but because this is Memorial Day weekend, I thought it would be appropriate to honor all of our GSS/GSG brethren who have gone before us. View the list of names at <http://www.1381st-gss.freesevers.com/custom.html>. May they all rest in peace...

More on That 1967 Det 4 Photo

In the April newsletter we mentioned that the 1967 Det 4 photo submitted last year by **Harry Harris** had been updated with corrected names. Since then, we have had another correction, thanks to **Gus Guliuzza** (Survey, numerous GSS assignments as both military and civilian, 1963-94) and verified by **Jim Baxley** (Survey, numerous assignments, 1962-85). It turns out that the person identified on the photo as **Richard Grizzard** is actually **Dave Brooks**. Regrettably, I have no contact info on either Richard or Dave.

Says Gus:

"...I hate to bring up the Det. 4 picture, but I feel that the person next to me [in the photo] is Dave Brooks, instead of [Richard] Grizzard. I think that Jim Baxley will verify this one way or another. He worked on several projects with Dave, as did I."

And Jim Baxley adds:

"Gosh, it sure looks like Dave Brooks, but I can't remember if he was at Det 4 when I got there in 69..."

Ron Nesti (Survey, Det 3, 1964-68), our Webmaster, has once again updated the labeling on this photo. You may view it at: <http://www.1381st-gss.freesevers.com/PhotoHarris.html>.

There still remains one civilian in the photo without a last name (Raymond ---), so if you are a veteran of Det 4, who can help us resolve this final omission, please do so as soon as possible.

Mysteries of 1961 Helicopter Crash in Germany Come to Closure

We have been trying for some time to get more details on that helicopter crash in Germany that killed one GSS man and injured several others in the early 1960s. We had conflicting information on the deceased man's name, rank and home town, and even the date of the accident. Now, thanks to some great detective work by **Pat Graham** (Survey, Orlando, 1960-64) we finally have come to closure. The GSS veteran, who died in the crash on Squadron business, was **A2C Lewis W. Williams** of Baton Rouge, LA. Here is the hometown press announcement:

"MORNING ADVOCATE, Baton Rouge, Sat. Nov. 4, 1961
Bad Toelz, Germany (AP) The U.S. Army said Friday that Airman 2 C Lewis W. Williams of 1214 North 37th St., Baton Rouge, was killed in an Army helicopter crash near there Oct. 26.
Eight others were hurt. The cause of the crash has not been determined.
Williams was the
son of Mrs Mary Beatrice Williams of 1214 37th street."

Jim Unfried (Astro, Gravity, Data Reduction, Field Survey; Orlando, 1960-64) had also identified a survivor of that crash as **Bob Colonnell**:

"I know of another guy that was present in the helicopter accident in Germany. You may remember Bob Colonnell from St. Petersburg, Florida. He and I rode back and forth together on weekends at times, since that was my home as well. He had some burns and nothing too severe. I last saw him in 1976 or '77 in the Tri-cities area of SE Tennessee. He was a College Prof. and Dean of Men at the local school there..."

Pat resolved Bob Colonnell's status too. Unfortunately, Bob passed away in 2004 in the Johnson City area of Tennessee. I was not able to find an obituary for either man.

We can now finally properly honor both Airman Williams, who died on duty carrying out Squadron business, and Robert Colonnell, who survived that crash only to die years later after a career in academia. Another survivor of the crash, SMSgt **Bob Butler**, passed away in retirement and is also on our list of deceased GSS veterans. **Ron Nesti**, our Webmaster, has added both Williams and Colonnell to our online list of deceased GSS veterans.

More War Stories...

In recent newsletters we have been asking for and reporting on interesting projects in which our veterans have participated. We have mentioned the exploits and ingenuity of folks who worked above the Arctic Circle, in Antarctica, and on various gravity and astro projects, and last time, we heard from **Karl Geibel** (Survey, Det 1 & FEW, 1972-76) with regard to photographing Soviet satellite silhouettes as they eclipsed stars. I also mentioned the unique project at Northrop Nortronics in Norwood, Massachusetts, where

we brought astro-geodetic positioning and azimuth control inside a factory to verify the accuracy of gyros being manufactured for the Air Force.

That story brought in a comment from **Mike Himes** (Astro/Survey, FEW, 1966-70), one of many other GSS veterans who followed up that Nortronics survey with subsequent azimuth observations to build up the database. Mike reminded me of other special projects in Massachusetts supporting the MIT Lincoln Lab and the Air force Cambridge Research Lab (AFCRL) at Hanscom, AFB in 1968. Says Mike:

“**Bob Holtman** and I worked at the MIT lab and Nortronics Corp. on three different TDY's back in 1968, I believe. At the MIT lab we were observing azimuths from a swivel chair (down low to the floor) looking up through the ceiling at Polaris. First and only time I did observations sitting down!!”

Mike was absolutely right about that special observing arrangement at the MIT Lincoln Lab. **Truitt Sims** (Survey, FEW, 1967-70) and I were the first to try it in early 1968, and it required observing from a motor-controlled swivel chair mounted low to the floor using the lab's Kern DKM3A theodolite, an instrument not commonly available in the Squadron's inventory at that time. Observations were made to auto-collimating reflectors and to Polaris through an elaborate, climate-controlled tube in the roof and a special air-permeable membrane on either end of the tube to reduce refraction. It was a truly elaborate piece of MIT engineering!

That brought to mind another special project we supported around that same time in early 1968 at the nearby AFCRL---the testing of a prototype laser long-distance electronic distance measurer (EDM).

Since I was already in Massachusetts for the Nortronics azimuth observations, I met up with the late **Tom Perrott**, who had arrived from Cheyenne with several more team members in March of 1968. The team that arrived with Tom included **Truitt Sims**, the late **Jim Cain**, the late **Herb Matson**, **Harry Rusher**, **Larry Hootman** and probably a few others I can't recall. We had originally planned to measure a long line from the rooftop station at AFCRL to a 21-prism reflector at the top of Mount Wachusett about 35 miles west of the base. As luck would have it, smoke or fog was blowing across our line of sight, and we could not get a strong enough return signal from the reflector prisms. We later discovered that Harvard Observatory, about half way between the base and Mount Wachusett, and almost directly in line, had a triangulation station with a 50-ft Bilby tower already plumbed over it, so we decided to measure the distance as two legs of a long, skinny triangle: AFCRL to Harvard and Mount Wachusett to Harvard, then compute the length AFCRL to Mount Wachusett via triangulation. All three points had geodetic control already established at the AFCRL rooftop, Mount Wachusett and Station Harvard at the observatory. We were able to compute the inverse geodetic lengths and directions between all stations and compare them to our measured results. The computed distance via triangulation and the distance computed via the inverse between Mount Wachusett and AFCRL were within a few millimeters.

The night that we made the measurements turned into quite an interesting evening. Tom & I drove to Mount Wachusett in the early evening, while others were at AFCRL's rooftop station and station Harvard at Harvard Radio Observatory. On the dark country road as Tom and I were heading west toward the mountain, a meteor suddenly flashed overhead with a brilliant greenish light. I heard it pop and saw it break up into several pieces---a rare event known as a bolide. It lasted only a couple of seconds, but it was spectacular!

By chance, it was also a night of a lunar eclipse, where the moon passes through the Earth's shadow. As Tom and I finally reached the top of Mount Wachusett in our GSA wagon, the place was already crowded with local amateur astronomers and curious local folks hoping to witness the eclipse. We soon drew our own crowd of onlookers, as we set up our odd-looking laser EDM and peripheral equipment. At the pre-arranged time, Tom fired up the ruby red laser and there was an instant flash of a brilliant red light reflected back to us from the 21-prism reflector set-up at Harvard. Just then, the Earth's shadow started to cross the moon. People's jaws dropped, and I'm sure some of them went home thinking that we somehow triggered the eclipse with a secret device!! All in all, it was a memorable night. By the way, that prototype laser EDM, a modified Model 4D Geodimeter, eventually became the much sleeker Model 8 Geodimeter, a reliable workhorse for direct long-line measurement in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Please send me your own recollections on interesting projects in which you have participated, and I'll share them with the rest of the gang!

More on Missile Badges

In the April newsletter **Jim Porterfield** (Survey, Orlando & Det 5, 1960-64) suggested another story to develop---the origins and evolution of the Missile Badge and how the GSS got to wear them. We agreed that it is a great idea, as many of us got to wear those "pocket rockets" on our uniforms, and I speculated that someone in the early days of the Squadron must have gone through considerable effort to enable our early GSS veterans to be awarded the Missile Badge for all our work on all the various missile site surveys and the long-running annual check surveys.

Ron Knaus (Admin/Personnel/Transportation, Orlando, 1959-62) one of the early Squadron staffers (and one of our in-house pilots) responded with some insight on how we got the badges:

"I think it was **Russ Fredrick** (sp?) in Orlando that had to do with the Rocket. I think it was done just prior to Col Peterson's arrival in Orlando from Del Rio. Can't swear to this, but I think everyone who could is dead....I remember going to the 1381st and Russ was wearing one, and he very proudly indicated that it was his idea."

Russ was apparently the acting commander of the interim detachment out of the Air Photographic and Charting Service at Turner AFB, which was later to become the 1381st Geodetic Survey Squadron.

Ron adds this about Russ being the interim commander just prior to the official establishment of the 1381st:

“...When I first came to the 1381st, maybe even before the name was certain, Russ Fredricks (sp.) met both Lt/Col Gene Lucchesi and myself. This is when I found out that I was being transferred from Turner to Orlando. They had a new squadron coming soon, and no one to know how to operate it.”

Some of the early history of the organizational transition that led to the formation of the 1381st has been nicely summarized by **Gordon Barnes** (Acting Commander, then Deputy Commander for Operations, FEW, 1975-78). It's written from the perspective of the USAF photomapping community, which is the organizational element from which the Squadron was born. Read it on our website at this link: <http://www.1381st-gss.freesevers.com/mementos.html> “Our Ground Geodetic Surveyor Brethren.”

It would be great to hear from anyone else who was on the original Orlando staff to verify Ron's recollections and learn more about who won authorization for the Squadron members to wear the Missile Badge.

Have You Sent Me Your Contact Information?

If you have not done so already, please send me your contact information (or updates) using the format below. Just reply to this newsletter or send me a separate e-mail with your:

NAME:

ADDRESS: (Include street or mailbox #, city, state and zip code)

PHONE:

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

MILITARY or CIVILIAN: (Answer “both” if you served the unit in both capacities)

HIGHEST RANK or POSITION in GSS/GSG:

START/END DATES OF SERVICE IN GSS/GSG: (Multiple entries, if you had more than one assignment)

ORGs: (i.e., where you worked: Admin, Astro, Computing, Data Reduction, Detachment #, Gravity, Logistics, Operations, Orderly Room, Sat Tri, Stellar Camera, Survey, etc.)

OTHER: (Whatever else you want to share here about your time in the Squadron or since then.)

If you have been holding back due to privacy concerns, remember that a user name and password protects your contact information, so only other Squadron veterans with user names and passwords will see it. **Ron Nesti** (Det 3, Grand Forks AFB, 1964-68), our Webmaster, will contact you with your user name and password when he loads your info on our GSS/GSG website.

Meanwhile, check out Ron's great website at <http://www.1381st-gss.freesevers.com/index.html>. The homepage tells you what's new, and there's also an archive of old newsletters. If your name is on the online roster, log in to check your own profile and see if it's still current. If not, send me your updates.

If you have forgotten your user name or password, contact Ron (ron.nesti@q.com) to send you a reminder or to reset it for you.

If you have not sent yours yet, or if you have updates to your locator information, please send me your current contact information by reply right after you read this newsletter!

Why Your Contact Info Is Important to Us

Although it seems like I nag about this every month, keeping your contact info up to date is important. It helps us get the word out to you about our reunions and to share news about your old friends and colleagues. It also helps us to reunite old friends. For example, just recently we received this request from **Paul Patenaude** (Data Reduction & Gravity, FEW, 1970-73), who is trying to track down a few old friends: **Paul Balionis**, **Frank Grudzinski**, **Charley Thompson** and **Wayne Paige**. Says Paul:

“We all went PCS [from training] to **Bob Weaver**/Data Reduction in Cheyenne. I'd love to know any info on Wayne Paige...we were roommates in Cheyenne. I was sent to Barksdale after Thompson. Wayne went after me. Thompson returned to Cheyenne Data Reduction after two TDYs in SEA. He married the First Shirt's daughter at Base Chapel in 1973.

On my return to Cheyenne, I asked Col. Heiniger for Gravity.

Paige went to Barksdale after I did, completed his 2 TDY's and was stationed in Colorado when he returned. I visited him w/ his Thai wife in Monrovia, CA, in April '77.

I last heard of Wayne when he moved back to Cheyenne after his wife was deported ...He married a Cheyenne girl, and they had a daughter. I lost contact with him in the early 80's and would love to know where he is now. He was a good friend with Donna, a data reduction civilian, who key-punched astro-survey data...

If you can access any info, I would be in your debt.”

Paul also sent us a photo of himself with his friends named above upon their graduation from Ft Belvoir's Army Engineer Topographic School. You may view it at <http://www.1381st-gss.freesevers.com/PhotoPatenaude.html>.

We were able to put Paul in contact with Frank Grudzinski, but we have no contact info on the others. If you know how to reach Balionis, Thompson or Paige, please send them our way!

Latest Updates to Our Online Roster

Here are the latest additions and updates to our roster:

Jim Baxley (mentioned above) moved from Alabama to Florida recently and sent us his updated contact information; he is now updated our online roster.

Kyle Hipsley (Survey, Det 4, 1984-86) is currently Acting Commissioner, International Boundary Commission, U.S. and Canada. Kyle found us on the web and sent us his contact information. We have added his name to our online roster. Kyle adds this nice note about his time at Det 4:

“**Pat Gilligan** and **Niles Rubar** taught me more about surveying in two years while working on the Cape than I had learned in the ten years prior. Many of the GSS Veterans may know my father **Ed Hipsley**, who worked for DMA out of the satellite branch in Reston, VA, for many years. He is alive and well in Leesburg, FL.”

David Ege (Survey, FEW, 1971-72) is another veteran who discovered us while surfing the web and asked to join his fellow GSS veterans. Says David:

“I would like to be listed on your website. I was at FEW in 1971-72 and recognize several names on your website.”

Thanks for the updates, and welcome to new members!

Succession Planning – GSS Website Administrator Needed:

I recently received this thoughtful, if sobering, message from our friend and GSS Webmaster, **Ron Nesti**:

“As I approach my 70th, we need to think about recruiting a back-up/replacement for me.

Doesn't take a lot of tech savvy. If they can read and type, I can teach them the rest. HTML is pretty easy to learn. **They just have to want to do it.**

I just renewed our Freeservers account for two more years. They won't have to worry about that until 2016.”

What---no Ron at the helm to keep our excellent website fine and up to date? The horrors!

Actually, Ron is right to note that it is wise for us to have succession plans in place. My own recent bout with health problems reminded me that we are not immortal, and the mission must go on to find as many GSS veterans as we can, keep them together and to continue to meet every few years to celebrate the fun and important things we did. We implicitly trust that there are others who could take over the job and probably even do it better.

As I said to Ron, “I hate to see you go! Your work on the GSS site has been so instrumental in drawing in long-lost Squadron veterans. I understand the sentiment, however---I'll be 73 on my next birthday and I'll be looking for someone else to take over the reunions one of these days.”

Not that Ron is anxious to leave us---he adds:

“Thanks. I really enjoy doing it and I am committed to keeping it up as long as I am able. But one never knows, and succession planning is a good thing to do.”

Any volunteers to take over the GSS Veterans website? If yes, please contact both Ron and me.

ron.nesti@q.com; garrettmoore@verizon.net

Final Notes:

We are having a spectacular Memorial Day weekend here in the Washington, DC, area. We hope you are having the same---although I know our folks in Colorado may still be shoveling out from the recent 5-inch dump of ping pong ball-sized hail stones and accompanying tornados! Never a dull moment along the Front Range!

(See <http://www.usatoday.com/story/weather/2014/05/21/denver-colorado-hail-storm/9389729/>.)

From Bonnie and me to all of you, enjoy your summer---but let us remember on this Memorial Day all those in uniform who gave their all to keep us free.

Garrett
Field Survey & Astro
GSS/Cheyenne
April 1967 - May 1970 and January - December 1972

Nothing makes the Earth seem so spacious as to have friends at a distance—they make the latitudes and longitudes.