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

And a Happy Presidents Day to all of you! Here's a timely bit of presidential wisdom for the occasion:

“The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war...shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation.”

— George Washington

There was no newsletter in January, so you haven't missed anything. Bonnie and I were away for a few weeks, to try to escape some of the winter weather bedeviling the central and eastern parts of the country. In fact, it's another snowy day here as I write, and much of the East Coast is caught up in yet another spate of cold, wind and snow. Bonnie & I narrowly escaped the 30-inch blizzard that hit the DC area and mid-Atlantic a few weeks ago. We jumped in our car and headed south the day before the storm hit. Unfortunately, we didn't go far enough, as the southern edge of the storm caught up with us in Asheville, NC, dumping only eight inches of snow, but enough to strand us in a hotel for two days. When the roads cleared, we were pleased to meet up with GSS veterans, **Bob and Bev Millians**, in Athens, GA, and we had a nice visit with them. Continuing south from there, we spent a couple of weeks meandering about in central Florida, which was only slightly warmer than home. The highlight of the trip for me was a couple of days in the Cocoa Beach area, where we took in an all-day visit to the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral. This probably won't much impress the veterans of Det 4 or the current NGA Geodetic Support Team, who spent much of their time up close and personal, supporting historic launches during the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, and Space Shuttle programs and other launches, but I was as thrilled as a school boy among the historic rockets on display, the ride to the Vehicle Assembly Building and the visit to the historic launch pads 39A and 39B! A great place to visit when you are in Florida!

### ***More on the History of LS-85***

As you are aware from recent newsletters, I have been collaborating with **Gordon Barnes** (Acting GSS Commander and Deputy Commander for Operations, FEW, 1975-78) and **Julian Higgins** (Computations, FEW, 1968-69; Sat Tri, FEW, 1975-76; Commander, Det 1, 1977-80) on a history of the accomplishments of the Photomapping Wing and the GSS during the Vietnam era, particularly with respect to the ill-fated Combat Skyspot operations at Lima Site 85 (LS-85) on Phou Pha Thi Mountain in Laos. For those who don't know, Combat Skyspot was the name given to special radar operations that guided the B-52s and other tactical air support on bombing runs in Vietnam. (For details, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combat\\_Skyspot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combat_Skyspot) )

LS-85 was a highly classified Skyspot installation in Laos, nominally a neutral country, which was intended to improve the radar support for areas inside North Vietnam. LS-85 was ill-fated because it was over-run by the North Vietnamese only a few months after becoming operational leading to the single worst loss of Air force personnel during the Vietnam War. A total of 12 U.S. personnel were missing or killed in the fighting on Phou Pha Thi; 11 were killed or missing on the ground and one was shot dead during the evacuation. The single fatality occurring during the evacuation was CMSgt **Richard Etchberger** of the 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Evaluation Group (1<sup>st</sup> CEG), who was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously in September 2010 for his role in helping four injured airmen into the evacuation helicopter lift sling. Etchberger was mortally wounded as he was climbing into the evacuation helicopter. For details, see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Lima\\_Site\\_85](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Lima_Site_85) .

The Photomapping Wing had completed an aerial HIRAN survey in late 1967 to establish the position of LS-85, and that required support of ground surveys. Julian had recovered two geodetic control points in Thailand near Udorn AB, but needed ground survey support for astro-azimuth and astro-positioning. While doing the research for the article, we were not certain which organization provided the geodetic and astronomic observations on the ground, 1381<sup>st</sup> GSS or 1<sup>st</sup> CEG, which already had surveyors and computers on the ground supporting Skyspot activities in Vietnam. Many of our GSS veteran surveyors and computers are also veterans of 1<sup>st</sup> CEG. That mystery has now been cleared up, thanks to input received, first, from CMSgt **Larry Hootman** (Survey, Sat Tri; Orlando, FEW & Det #1; 1960-85) and most recently from SMSgt **Connie Musha** (Survey. Gravimetry and IPS: Orlando. 1959-62; FEW. 1975-77). Connie recently sent the note below.



<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?pid=177036857>

We also recently learned of the passing of Maj Gen **Richard M. Wells**, USA, former Director, Defense Mapping Agency, who died on October 22, 2015. General Wells served as the Agency's fifth director (July 1981 – June 1983) and kicked off the beginning of a major modernization of DMA's production methods, moving DMA from paper to digital products to support warfighters and decision makers. Read Gen Wells' obituary here: <http://www.tributes.com/obituary/show/Richard-Marshall-Wells-102968453>

May they both rest in peace...

### ***New Members***

We have one new member to add to our online roster of GSS veterans and one who updated his contact information.

**Thomas Walt** (Gravity & Survey, FEW, 1981-86) said he found the GSS website while web surfing for old squadrons to which he had been assigned.

**Lee L. Robert** (Maintenance, FEW, 1967-70) wrote to report that he has retired from the University of New Orleans and changed his e-mail address. He adds, "Thanks for the latest newsletter; it's a joy to read! ... Thanks and keep up the good work."

If you are a friend or former colleague of these veterans and you have a user name/password, you may see their contact information on our GSS/GSG website.

Think about your old friends, colleagues and barracks roommates from the Squadron and check our online roster to see if their names are listed. If not, send me their names, and we'll try to track them down and add them to our growing list of rediscovered GSS/GSG veterans. If you have orders with exact names, serial numbers or can recall any other details, please share those too. That will help us narrow down our search.

### ***Your Contact Information and Profile***

About 500 of you receive this newsletter, because I have your e-mail addresses. However, only about 40% of you have sent me the rest of your contact information and a brief profile of your time with the Squadron or Group. You can check our online roster at <http://www.1381st-gss.freesevers.com/index.html>. If your name is not there and you are reading this newsletter, you are among those who have not yet sent me their full contact info and profile. If you would like to have your name listed on our GSS/GSG website along side your former friends and colleagues, please close the gap by sending me the rest of your contact information (or updates to your existing profile) using the format below. In 10 easy lines---just hit '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: (List multiple entries, if you had more than one assignment to the GSS/GSG)

BASE ASSIGNED TO: (Orlando, FEW, or Detachment location and dates)

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

OTHER: (Whatever else you want to share here about your time in the Squadron/Group or what you have been up to since then.)

You will receive a user name and password to protect your private information, so only other Squadron veterans with user names and passwords will be able to see it. **Dick Winslow** (Stellar Camera, FEW, 1966-70), our Webmaster, will contact you with your user name and password when he loads your info onto our GSS/GSG website.

Meanwhile, check us out at <http://www.1381st-gss.freesevers.com/index.html>.

The homepage tells you what's new, what's coming, the list of all who have sent us their contact information, and links to the list of our deceased veterans, photos submitted by our members and lots of other useful information, including links to "kindred organizations," such as the AF Photomapping Association, the Defense Mapping School Faculty/Staff Alumni, and the NGA Alumni Associations, East and West. There's also an archive of old newsletters in case you missed any.

***If your name is already on our online roster, please log in to check your own profile and see if it's still current. If not, please send me your updates! If you have forgotten your user name and/or password, contact Dick Winslow to remind you or reset it for you***

***Final Notes:***

I am putting the final touches on the promised survey that I want to send to all our members regarding the next reunion---how soon, how often and where the next one should be, etc. I will mail the survey separately from this newsletter later this month, so that you can focus just on considering your answers to the survey. I hope there will be a big response, especially from those of you who have never been to a previous reunion, because you had an aversion to going to Cheyenne for one reason or another. This will be your opportunity to speak up for a reunion in a locale that you prefer, and hopefully, one that appeals to the majority of our veterans. Or conversely, you can use the survey to reaffirm that Cheyenne is the *only* proper location for our reunions. The bigger the response, the more likely it will be that it represents the majority opinion of our veterans, who live all over the country---and a few even live overseas. I'm already receiving invitations from professional reunion planners who want to plan and host our next reunion.

I welcome you to "friend" me on Facebook or find me on LinkedIn. We also have a Facebook page for the Squadron/Group at <https://www.facebook.com/1381GeodeticSurveySquadron?fref=ts>.

***Baby, it's cold outside---but spring is just around the corner!***

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. – Henry David Thoreau, Surveyor and Philosopher*

