



Tennessee Valley Flyer

Air Force Association • Tennessee Valley Chapter 335 Quarterly Newsletter



March 2009

Members Provided Insight into Son Tay POW Raid

Presentation during AFA Chapter 335 Quarterly meeting.

Col Dick Peshkin, a retired Air Force colonel who lives and works in the Huntsville area, was the speaker for our quarterly membership meeting held on 14 October at the SRS facility on Discovery Drive in Research Park. Dick briefed his experiences as a Pentagon-based Special Operations Plans Officer involved in the Son Tay Prisoner of War Raid into North Vietnam. Using vu-graph maps, illustrated drawings, and declassified SR-71 imagery, Dick showed the ingress routes and timing of the C-130s and A-1 attack aircraft for the November 1970 raid. He discussed the procedures utilized in recruiting and assembling aircrews that flew the assault force into the target. He talked about the level of security, the need for rehearsals, the intelligence to support the raid, and the actual mission. After his presentation, he entertained questions for about 30 minutes.



"Welcome Mat" rolled out to Chapter's newest members

Mary Scott Hunter – A former- AF JAG, a lawyer in Huntsville, previously served in the Air Force Reserves, and most recently served as a member of the 187th Fighter Wing, Alabama Air National Guard (ANG).

Russell Lewey – A retired AF colonel and a Defense & Homeland Security Consultant, Russ is a former "Buff" pilot with several attaché tours, recently relocated to Huntsville from Alexandria, VA.

Jim Porter – A USAFA graduate of the Class of '76, Jim was a pilot having flown F-4s and F-16s. He has lived in Huntsville for 10 years.

Membership Elects New Slate of Chapter Leaders

The Chapter held its annual election of officers in the business portion of the 14 October 2008 meeting. The Chapter's officers for 2009 are:

President (and acting Secretary) -
Rick Driesbach

Vice President - Greg Smith

Treasure - Jack Royster

Chapter's Own Medal of Honor Recipient, Colonel Leo Thorsness, Releases Book

Early this year, Encounter Books published Col Leo Thorsness' book, "Surviving Hell: A POW's Journey" – a memoir of his six years spent in the Hanoi Hilton. An article in the The Huntsville Times reported, *that the book is getting good buzz. The Wall Street Journal called "Surviving Hell" an "unsparing personal memoir of life in communist captivity."* It's also been plugged by McCain and "NBC Nightly News" anchor Brian Williams.

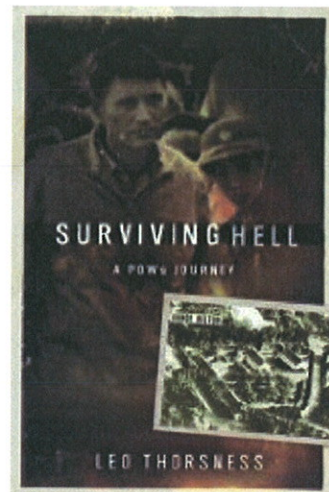
Amazon Book Reader Review -

Leo Thorsness is one of only five living United States Air Force Medal of Honor Recipients. He is one of our nation's greatest heroes. "Surviving Hell: A POW's Journey" is his compelling memoir which makes us all appreciate our freedom. Leo writes with passion. He very realistically articulates the horrors of war and imprisonment. "Surviving Hell" teaches us important lessons, including how very fortunate we are. Recommend the book most highly.

Warrior Traditions podcast link –

http://psychjourney_blogs.typepad.com/warrior-traditions/2009/01/surviving-hell-a-pows-journey.html

See the inset for a reader's review and a link to a podcast interview with Col Thorsness conducted by Dr. Kevin Keough, host of the Warrior Traditions and North Star Guardians.



National AFA Conference – Member's First-Hand Account

Our Chapter's own Bob Hovde had the honor this past September of participating as a member of the Alabama Delegation, representing not only the state, but our own Tennessee Valley Chapter at the National AFA Convention held in Washington DC. Bob was one of 234 "official" delegates representing 44 states and the District of Columbia. Once again the Conference was in concert with the AFA Air & Space Conference and Technology

Exposition. Secretary Michael B. Donley and Gen Norton A. Schwartz headed a host of speakers from the Air Force, other DoD, Government, and Defense Industry leaders.

The Preliminary Business Session on Saturday mostly involved the introduction of candidates for national offices and the Board of Directors – with the nominees visiting the evening caucus sessions for introductions and discussions.

Sunday morning found the delegates at the Air Force Memorial for a short ceremony and wreath laying. It was a beautiful, but cool, morning and the event was well attended, both by delegates and Air Force people stationed in the D.C. area. Bob stated, "If you haven't been to the Air Force Memorial yet, you should make it a priority the next time you get to Washington. It's on the hill just behind the Pentagon."



The Sunday Business Session included the election of National Officers and several members of the Board of Directors. Of particular interest to our region was the election to the Board of Len Vernamonti from Mississippi. Last year's decision to combine the national offices of treasurer and secretary was overturned during this session, thus the AFA will retain both a treasurer

and a secretary. Also on the agenda was the adoption of the 2009 "Statement of Policy" and "Top Issues." The AFA 2009 – 2013 Strategic Plan was presented to the delegates, expanding the "support" aspect of the AFA Mission. That portion of the mission now reads, "Support the Air Force, the Air Force family, and *aerospace education*."

To read the AFA 2009 Statement of Policy and Top Issues go to the AFA web page (<http://www.afa.org/>).

For more on the AFA Convention, check out your Nov 2008 Air Force Magazine (also available on the AFA web site).

Mission of the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the Air Force Association

- **Educate** Valley residents on capabilities and processes by which USAF brings Air, Space and Cyberspace power to meet the joint war fighting requirements of the United States
- **Advocate** for technologies, capabilities and resources that exist within the Valley that could assist USAF with its' technology, acquisition, and integration challenges in joint fight
- **Support** USAF-associated organizations (Jr AFROTC, USAF Recruiters, USAF Reserve, ANG, CAP) with education, advocacy, and execution of their operational missions
- **Support** membership, and the Air Force community as a whole, within the Tennessee Valley

Chapter's Flight Plan

Chapter President – Rick Driesbach

First, I am honored to be given the opportunity to serve as President of the Tennessee Valley Chapter. That said, this is your Chapter and our organization can only succeed through group effort. We have over 300 members on our roster and with ever-growing defense operations and industry in the area – I can't help but think that ours numbers could easily grow.

To facilitate our growth, we are looking to further our outreach through communication and an expansion of Chapter's activities. Through increased participation, I have no doubt we will grow our ranks and similarly, enable our Chapter to expand its ability to meet the key tenets of our mission – educate, advocate, and support.

I look forward to an exciting year working with and for you. Feel free to contact me with your thoughts and ideas and hope to see you at our upcoming events. You can contact me at Rick.Driesbach@Nexolve.com, or at 971-7049.

Sincerely,



Chapter President Contacts Office of Rep Parker Griffith

Drawing upon the Chapter's Mission, Rick Driesbach, AFA Chapter 335 President, met with newly-elected Congressman Parker Griffith's staff here in Huntsville. During the 30-minute office call he took the opportunity to explain the Chapter's role, highlighting its membership as a valuable asset in gaining additional insight into Air Force issues. Rick extended an invitation to attend our quarterly meetings; we look forward to future contacts and perhaps a visit by the Congressman and/or a member of his staff in the coming months.

Congressman Griffith's Huntsville office is at 2101 Clinton Ave (the old SCI Building) Suite 302. Phone number there is: 551-0190.

*Please ensure that the Chapter has your most current email address. Send updates to Rick Driesbach
(Rick.Driesbach@Nexolve.com).*

Also, don't forget the Air Force Almanac is out in May

Make sure your AFA membership and address is up to date.

You don't want to miss this important resource (especially in light of the "Take the AF to Work Campaign" on page 4)

Aerospace Education Update

Sam Liburdi, Chapter 335 VP for Veteran Affairs, in conjunction with American Legion Post 229 (as Post 229 AFJROTC Liaison to BJHS AFJROTC), presented a \$500 donation check to cadets and staff representatives of the Bob Jones High School AFJROTC unit. The donation will be used by the unit to assist with purchasing new training items and accessories for their Honor Guard.



**AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION
TENNESSEE VALLEY CHAPTER 335**

**WE ARE ON THE WEB
WWW.HSV-AFA.ORG**

Vision

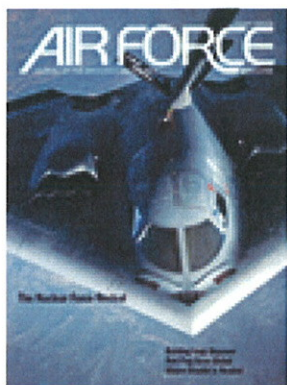
Chapter 335 of the Air Force Association is the premier conduit for the education and advocacy of U.S. Air Force Air, Space and Cyberspace power within the Tennessee Valley.

Air Force to Work Campaign

In support of our mission to educate and advocate, we are starting a "Take the Air Force to Work Campaign". We're encouraging you to take your "Air Force Magazine" to work.

In so doing, your office mates and visitors are given an opportunity to enjoy the Air Force magazine, while you are simultaneously contributing to the AFA commitment to educate others about the Air Force and the critical role of airpower in our Nation's defense. Hopefully, this increased visibility will also translate into more AFA members.

It is important to note that for more than 60 years, the Air Force magazine has stood at the top of the world's



publications in the fields of airpower, space power, aerospace technology, and defense. It is a one-of-a-kind magazine -- a visually striking, in-depth, professionally produced magazine devoted exclusively to coverage of the United States Air Force. Thus, the Air Force Magazine should be the first magazine available in the office of any aerospace professional or AFA member.

**Chapter Upcoming
Events**

26 Feb, Thurs, Social Hour at Fire House Pub - 4:30 pm (Just off of Goss Road across from the Fox Army Medical Clinic) Very Informal.

10 Mar, Tues, Quarterly Meeting - 6:00 pm at ManTech Auditorium (1st Floor), 655 Discovery Drive. Presentation: Counter-Terrorism Operations in the Philippines

26 Mar, Thurs, Chapter 335 Executive Council - 5:45 pm at ManTech, 655 Discovery Drive. All interested members welcome

May AFA Chapter 335 Jr AFROTC Scholarship Presentations
Times and Places TBD