



THE DUSTOFFER

NOVEMBER 1987

DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION, P. O. Box 8091, Wainwright Station, San Antonio, Texas 78208

THE PREZ SEZ:



Now that I have returned from Korea after a year's absence from DUSTOFF activities, I am ready to pick up the reins and assume my duties as President of the Association. I must give many thanks to Jim Ritchie, the other officers, and the members-at-large who so ably filled the gap during my absence.

Your Executive Council has already met and formulated plans for the 9th Annual Meeting/Reunion. It promises to be another extravaganza that DUSTOFFers have come to expect (See announcement elsewhere in this newsletter).

I invite your comments, criticisms and notes of various types. Be assured that this is YOUR Association; I am only the steward to insure that your wishes are carried out.

Don Conkright

1987 MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

The 1987 Membership Directory is finished. Addresses contained therein are correct as of 1 October 1987 for those members who sent in changes of address. We know there are many incorrect addresses and hope that your mail will be forwarded. Please keep your Association informed!

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The 9th Annual Meeting/Reunion of the DUSTOFF Association will be held on February 19, 20, and 21, 1988 at the Holiday Inn N.W. Loop Hotel, San Antonio, Texas.

The theme for this year's reunion will be "Fasching Time in San Antonio." You DUSTOFFers who have served in Germany will remember the Fasching parties with the weird and funny costumes and the festive spirit of the German people. Already the chefs at the Holiday Inn are leafing through their cook books to come up with typical German meals and the caterer is looking for good light and dark German beer. Remember the German wines? He promises that too, and perhaps even a wine tasting event.

So, plan now to attend, with or without costume or funny face (for most of us our natural faces are funny enough) and come on down to Fasching in San Antonio. Details, with reservation forms, will be sent to you in December.

IN MEMORIAM

SGM (RET) Carroll S. Hicks, a Life Member of the Association, has recently died. At his family's request, his name has been removed from the mailing list.



STORM CAT

As a result of the "We Need Your Help" item in the last issue of The DUSTOFFer, the 63rd MED DET sent an article from the Kaiserslautern American which contained a good account of the 63rd MED DET. The article included a paragraph about Storm Cat, the unit's unofficial mascot. It appears that Storm Cat showed up at the hangar on the day in 1971 when the 63rd had its last accident. It is said that the day Storm Cat leaves the area, the next accident will occur. Needless to say, the members of the 63rd take good care of the animal and hope he never leaves.

NOTE: Sixteen years is a long time in a cat's life, so instead of Storm Cat having to look for field mice, perhaps the unit should bring him mice every day in order to conserve his strength and insure longevity. At any rate, congratulations to the 63rd on their accident-free spree and thanks to many DUSTOFFers who served in the 63rd during that period.

SOUND OFF !!!!

Our request for news or items brought forth a letter from BG (RET) Dave Thomas. Dave is a Life Member and joined the Association at an early date in order to help the Association, as he puts it, "to get off the ground." Dave is now retired and is quite active in the Men's Garden Club here in San Antonio and appears regularly on radio WOAI giving advice and tips on gardening. Here is his letter in part: "A quarterly newsletter is a definite plus, but it needs membership input. Any member that has news or just wants to sound off on any subject, should shoot the copy in. By copy, I mean an article concerning a combat experience, general comments concerning what was good or bad and how it should have been improved. For instance, while I was in RVN, I formed two Medical Battalions and gave them the mission of having overall supervision of medical wheels and rotors. How about some comments concerning whether or not this was a good idea and did it work? If not, why not?"

About reunion sites, why not divide the country into geographical areas and rotate through the areas with a presentation by a member from that area who will assume responsibility. He should be able to present a location, cost and program. . . .

Enough of business! I'd just like to add that I have nothing but admiration for you people and the job you have done in combat. My first love is the Airborne Infantry--you are a close second. However, you are people cut from the same cloth--willing to let it all hang out and go the last mile. I salute you!"

NOTE: Many thanks, Dave, for your kind words and comments. Now, DUSTOFFers, let's sound off!!!!



And from a DUSTOFFer in California who forgot to sign his name: "How thrilled I was to see a picture of a medical helicopter, on a typical DUSTOFF mission, on the front page of my local newspaper and almost simultaneously see a short squib on the tube (national TV) and in a national magazine about the daring exploits of medical evacuation crews. When I heard that Comfort, Texas was the scene of the rescue work, I just knew that the 507th MED CO (AA) was involved. The only sad note was the implication that one pick-up resulted in a death with a patient falling to his death. It was not clear out here that this was from a medical helicopter or from a non-medical helicopter.

As I reflect back on the many hours that I spent, along with many others, at the BAMC heliport testing the hoist and the frustrations of having a cable shear, I am thankful that time and perseverance have perfected the equipment and techniques to allow routine rescues."

NOTE: A death due to falling did occur, but a medical helicopter was not involved. At any rate, congratulations to all members of the 507th for their daring efforts during the Comfort disaster. Without them the death toll could have been much greater.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION



We received a note from John Coleman of the OMEGA GROUP (Publishers of magazines) stating that an article about DUSTOFF will appear in the December issue of Soldiers of Fortune magazine. Based on some correspondence with John and from reading the magazine, the editor believes the article will be worth reading.

ATTENTION WO's

DUSTOFFer Bill Grauling has a bit of a problem. It seems that he attended the 1987 Reunion but saw only a few of his WO buddies. He is now looking for WO's who flew with the 498th MED CO (AA) in '67/68 and, as he puts it, "any other DUSTOFF pilots of that era." He has no firm plans for a reunion--just an idea and a desire. For information, write Bill Grauling, 146 South Boulding Street, Baltimore, MD 21224.

The Secretary of the Association will help Bill in any way possible. The 1987 Membership Directory might be of some assistance in locating WO members but addresses are not guaranteed.

Is it possible, or feasible, Bill, to consider having at least your first meeting in conjunction with the '88 DUSTOFF Reunion and to have a reserved space and program for those interested. We'll help in any way possible.

THINK ABOUT IT!

The DUSTOFF Association receives Air Net, a newsletter published by the National EMS Pilots' Association, P. O. Box 2354, Pearland, Texas 77588. The publication contains timely information pertaining to EMS activities and letters. From time to time a letter appears written by a person who signs his letter with F.W.F. (Fair Weather Flyer). We DUSTOFFers have a lot in common with EMS crews, many of whom have been DUSTOFFers themselves. Here is a fine letter from F.W.F. as published in the February 1987 issue. Think about it!

A LETTER TO AEROMEDICAL PILOTS AND CREW MEMBERS (THOSE WHO ARE STILL ALIVE)

Letter #1

In almost every piece of Aeromedical literature I read these days, I constantly see references to, "low ceiling/visibility", "marginal weather conditions", etc...and most of these articles are written not by non-aviation personnel, as might be expected, but by pilots!!

My question is, "What in the H*## are we doing out there in weather conditions such as these? Is the pressure THAT great from our employers, customers, or (possibly) ourselves? The sense of urgency that seems to have pervaded the aeromedical industry is a major factor contributing to the atrocious accident rate in this portion of the aviation business. Need I spend the time and space in this letter to attempt to prove what we all know about the accident rate? I think not.

Where did this idea originate? - that we must fly in marginal weather.

WHY must we fly in marginal weather?

The basic safety principles still apply in the aeromedical industry just as they always have in other portions of aviation. The only thing that seems to have changed is the "excuse", "But, this is a life-or-death flight!". I do not see that this excuse should mean anything new. Every flight I ever made was "life-or-death", (My life and the lives of my passengers). Remembering a few basic rules could possibly save the needless loss of life in the aeromedical industry:

1. The condition of the patient has absolutely nothing to do with the pilot's "Go-No Go" decision, or should not have.
2. The condition of the patient has never changed the condition of the weather. The only thing the condition of the patient has changed has been the decision of the pilot.
3. "Cowards" are not cowards at all. They have the fortitude to say, "No". They realize that the risks on certain flights far outweigh the possible benefits expected to be derived.
4. "Heroes" are not heroes at all. They are only the ones who "got away with it". When they do not get away with it, heroes become the accident we cowards read about.

I am a "coward" and have developed a yellow streak down my back. I used to be a "hero" and got away with it many times. A lot of my friends over the years did not.

Perhaps pilots in the midst of making the Go-No Go decision should key into certain words: "Well, I think I can probably make it", "I think the weather will hold out for this flight", "The weather is marginal, but I think I can do it", "It's doubtful, but I think it will be OK", or (The worst one) "Against my better judgement".

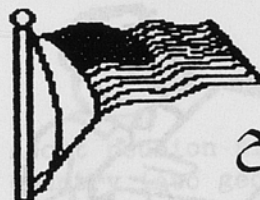
Those key words, "probably", "I think", "doubtful", and "marginal" send chills down my back - right down that yellow streak. I would much rather be on the ground, wondering if I should be flying, than in the air, knowing I should not be.

Unfortunately, one of the psychological aspects of a pilot is the know fact (known by himself) is that we can all fly into any weather condition and complete the mission. After all, haven't we all done so many times before and lived to "tell the tale"? No, not all of us have lived.

The rest of you can go ahead and continue to "push weather". As for me, I think I will continue to be a coward, for which my family continually thanks me, my passengers sometimes thank me, and maybe someday my employers will thank me.

Signed,
F.W.F.

ATLANTA
112 1989??



ONLY IN
AMERICA!

The request for your input for the 1989 Reunion site brought forth a very limited response. The vast majority voted for Atlanta. The Executive Council will consider your wishes and come up with a recommendation at the '88 Reunion. Many thanks to those of you who responded. Boos and hisses to those who did not!

421st MED CO (AA)

From the Commander of the 421st MED CO (AA) comes a note stating that the unit is presently supporting REFORGER as well as exercises in Italy and Turkey. He states that the 421st will be reorganized and that the medical aviation assets will include an evacuation battalion and 15 aircraft companies. Merle Snyder, the commander, will brief the Association on the reorganization at the '88 Reunion.

WHERE ARE YOU?

Following the last mailing of The DUSTOFFER, a number of newsletters were returned because of incorrect addresses. Should any of the readers of this newsletter know any of the following, please advise them to send in a change of address or notify the office of any change:

CW2 Fred Whitney, SFC David Maywhort, CW2 Mel Rebholz, SP5 Eric Schaberg, COL (RET) Frank Copeland, CW3 Thomas Lockee, LTC (RET) Armond Simmons, SSG Lawrence Youch, COL (RET) Charlie Webb, CW3 Richard Bosworth, COL (RET) McLain Garrett, and Roger Opio.

Please tear off and send to: DUSTOFF Association, P. O. Box 8091,
Wainwright Station, San Antonio, Texas 78208.

He drove his GERMAN car made of SWEDISH steel with interior of ARGENTINE leather to a gasoline station, where he filled up with ARAB oil shipped in a LIBERIAN tanker and bought two FRENCH tires, composed of rubber from SRI LANKA.

At home, he dropped his MOROCCAN briefcase, hung up his SCOTTISH tweed wool coat, removed his ITALIAN shoes and EGYPTIAN cotton shirt, then donned a HONG KONG robe.

More comfortable now, he poured a cup of hot BRAZILIAN coffee into an ENGLISH coffee mug, set a MEXICAN place mat on an IRISH linen tablecloth atop a DANISH table treated with linseed oil from INDIA. Then he filled his AUSTRIAN pipe with TURKISH tobacco, lit it and picked up a JAPANESE ballpoint pen with which he wrote a letter to his Congressman demanding to know why the United States has an unfavorable balance of trade.

(Reproduced from "Retired Army Bulletin," Fort Sill, OK).

"QUOTABLE QUOTES"

Life is a great big canvas, and you should throw all the paint on it you can.

When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on. And swing!

Reader's Digest, October 1987

PRINT NAME (Last, First, MI)

RANK

Address

City, State, Zip

Phone Number

Effective date of change of address

Thoughts on Atlanta for the 1989 DUSTOFF Meeting/Reunion