

News and Notes

January-March 2025



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Staff Sgt. Zoie Cox is the community engagement noncommissioned officer in charge at the 56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office, Luke AFB, Ariz., and the 2024 Brig. Gen. James W. Hart, Jr., "Best of the Best" winner.

This year's "Best of the Best"

Luke NCO named winner of Brig. Gen. James W. Hart, Jr., Award

By Dick Cole
Editor

Staff Sgt. Zoie Cox, community engagement NCOIC for the 56th Fighter Wing, Luke AFB,

Ariz.—the Air Force's largest fighter wing—is the 2024 recipient of the Brig. Gen., James W. Hart, Jr., "Best of the Best" Award.

Cox communicates the mission
(cont'd on p. 3)

From the President's pen...



It's good to start enjoying the warmer weather this Springtime as seasonal change is fully upon us. That includes the board members who serve in our Air Force Public Affairs Association. In this issue you'll find a ballot with which you may cast your vote for those who seek to provide continued and new leadership, helping make decisions guiding our organization. Check them out and be sure to vote for your nominees of choice so we can ensure a smooth continued operation. We are always on the hunt for interested members of our Air Force Public Affairs family of career fields, including the information/public affairs, band, visual information/Combat Camera and broadcasting specialties to dip their toe in the water and join the AFPAA team.

In coordination with the Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs, AFPAA established the Hall of Fame in 2021 to recognize and honor those who made significant and lasting contributions to the creation, growth and operation of the career field. Since that time, 34 officers, civilians and enlisted personnel have been inducted into the Air Force Public Affairs Hall of Fame. Our wall display highlights our first, or pioneer class, that was inducted in 2021. Kudos to AFPAA's retired Col. Art Forster who was a catalyst behind the project with his wingmen Lou Timmons and Clem Gaines coordinating the myriad details with the schoolhouse. If you ever get up there, be sure to check it out as we hope to inspire PA Airmen and Guardians by learning about those career field pioneers.

As previously reported, we will host our next annual AFPAA meeting in Northern California in 2026, around the Napa Valley/Travis AFB region. Keep an eye out for details as we land on specific dates and coordinate a full agenda.

In closing, I highly recommend checking out the new Netflix feature on the USAF Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team, a top-notch production that goes behind the scenes with the team. Let me offer a shout out to my fellow PA alum pros who also served on the team for bringing a compelling visual story to the American public.

Till next time, *Smoke Off, Ready Now!*

Flak

Air Force Public Affairs Association News and Notes, Dick Cole, editor, is published quarterly for members by the Air Force Public Affairs Association, P. O. Box 2446, East Peoria, IL 61611-2446. On-line subscriptions are available at www.AFPAA.org **Membership Information:** Those who have served or are currently serving in Air Force Bands, Broadcasting, Multimedia, and Public Affairs career fields, as either military or civilian, are eligible for Full Membership. **Membership Rates:** Lifetime \$300 (payable in four quarterly \$75 installments); Full, Adjunct and Affiliate Memberships, one year at \$25 or three years at \$50. Membership applications are available at www.AFPAA.org. **Officers and Board of Directors:** Chairman, John Dorrian; President, Eric Schnaible; Vice President, Carla Sylvester; Secretary, Chuck Merlo; Chief Financial Officer, Phil Ratliff; Brett Ashworth, Julie Briggs, Dick Cole, Cheryl Law, Jim McGuire, and Mike Paoli. **Committee Chairpersons:** Annual Membership Meeting Coordinator, Perry Nouis; Communications, Dick Cole; Development, Joe Purka; Elections, Kathy McCollom; Finance, Phil Ratliff; Membership, Christine Queen; Oral History, John Gura; Website, Jim McGuire; SAF/PA Liaison, Lou Timmons.

“Best of the Best: (cont’d from p. 1)

of 9,500 joint base members to the local, national and international audiences. She is specifically responsible for coordinating base tours, off-base engagements, navigating community inquiries and attending community events.

“Winning the Brigadier General James W. Hart, Jr., ‘Best of the Best’ Award is an incredible honor and quite humbling,” said Cox. “It’s a tremendous validation of the hard work and dedication that I have poured into my career. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the leadership and my fellow airmen at the 56th Fighter Wing; their support and camaraderie have been invaluable.”

Cox is a veteran of several deployments supporting humanitarian, contingency and combat operations in the Air Force Central Command’s area of operations and the Pacific.

“My deployment with AFCENT significantly shaped me as a PA professional. I will carry the lessons I learned alongside my team with me, far into the future.”

Receiving the award has reinforced Cox’s passion for the career field and motivates her to further “raise the bar” in her work.

“Given how critical Public Affairs is to connect the Air Force with the world, my goal now is to ensure the Air Force’s story is heard in a way that truly informs and resonates with people,” she said.

Cox is originally from Plain City, Ohio—a small town of a little more than 4,000 residents just minutes from the state capitol of Columbus.



Staff Sgt. Zoie Cox, second from left, rides on the cargo ramp of a Boeing C-17 Globemaster III to capture air-to-air photos of another C-17 in the distance. (Courtesy photo)

She enlisted in the Air Force in 2017. She is a 2018 graduate of the basic photojournalist course.

What advice does she offer to a colleague who aspires to be named AFPAA’s “Best of the Best?”

“My advice would be three-fold: First, embrace every opportunity to learn and grow. Public Affairs is a dynamic field, so stay current on best practices, emerg-

“*...be proactive and take ownership. Don’t just wait for assignments; identify areas where you can make a difference and actively seek out opportunities to contribute. Look for ways to elevate the impact of your work....*”

ing technologies, and evolving communication strategies. Never stop honing your skills, whether it’s through formal training, online courses, or simply seeking out new challenges within your role.

“Second, be proactive and take ownership. Don’t just wait for assignments; identify areas

where you can make a difference and actively seek out opportunities to contribute. Look for ways to elevate the impact of your work, whether it’s through innovative storytelling, strategic community engagement, or effective crisis communication.

“Finally, and perhaps most importantly, be a dedicated and reliable member of your team. Success in Public Affairs is rarely a solo endeavor. Build strong relationships with your colleagues, support their efforts, and be willing to go the extra mile to help them succeed,” Cox said.

In addition to her award of the Brig. Gen. James W. Hart, Jr., “Best of the Best” Award, Cox was also named the Air Force Public Affairs Communication Excellence “Outstanding Communications Airman.”

“Mentorship is essential for developing the next generation of Air Force Public Affairs leaders, and I am committed to paying it forward by mentoring others,” Cox concluded.

AFPAA builds Hall of Fame Display at Defense Information School

By Clem Gaines
Ex-Officio Board Member

After several years of coordination and design, a wall display featuring the Air Force Public Affairs Hall of Fame has been installed at the Defense Information School at Fort Meade, Md.

The Air Force Public Affairs Association, in coordination with the Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs, established the Hall of Fame in 2021 to recognize and honor those who made significant and lasting contributions to the creation, growth and operation of the Air Force Public Affairs family of career fields, including the information/public affairs, band, visual information/combat camera and broadcasting specialties.

According to Art Forster, AFPAA's HOF committee chairman, "We modeled our Hall of Fame after the Army Public Affairs Hall of Fame that was created by the Army Public Affairs Association and the Office of the Chief of Army Public Affairs in 2000. They later established a wall display at DINFOS to honor their HOF inductees. We subsequently decided to build our own display so DINFOS students would learn about the pioneers who helped build and grow the Air Force Public Affairs career field."

The Air Force Public Affairs Hall of Fame display highlights the 15 members of the first, or "pioneer class" of 2021. Scanning a quick response, or QR, code on the display with a cell phone provides direct access to the Hall of Fame section of AFPAA's website, including photos and bios of all HOF members who have been inducted since 2021.

The display includes additional information about AFPAA, the Hall of Fame and how to submit a nomination. It is located across the hall from the Air Force Public Affairs heritage display. Every year, more than 2,000 students, from all services, pass through it on their way to the main registration room to start their classes.



Above and Below: A couple of Airmen look at the new Air Force Public Affairs Hall of Fame display at the Defense Information School, Fort Meade, Md. The display contains a quick reference, or QR, code allowing a viewer to see all of the members of the Hall of Fame beyond those in the "pioneer class" named to the Hall in 2021. The new display is across the hall from the Air Force Public Affairs Heritage display. (DINFOS Photo)



The display was designed and constructed by LSDI Signs and Exhibits of Woodbridge, Va. Funding of the display was paid for entirely by AFPAA.

"Thanks much to Clem Gaines and Lou Timmons for bird-dogging this project over the past few months. Our contractor did a great job and the display is already receiving rave reviews from the DINFOS staff and students," said committee chairman Art Forster. Coverage of the ribbon cutting ceremony formally opening the exhibit at DINFOS will appear in the next quarterly issue of *News and Notes*.





Class of 2025

Hall of Fame

Four inducted into Hall of Fame for 2025



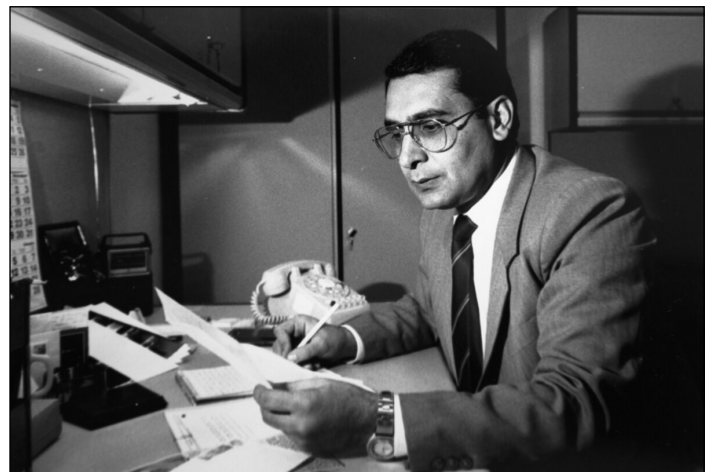
The Air Force Public Affairs Hall of Fame recognizes those Public Affairs professionals who have made unique, significant, and lasting contributions to the United States Air Force. Members of the Hall of Fame, whether enlisted, officer, or civilian, were groundbreaking leaders in one or more of the specialties encompassed by the Air Force Public Affairs career field—band, broadcasting, visual information/combat camera, and information/public affairs. They secured their places of honor in the history and traditions of the Air Force by their ceaseless and eminently successful efforts to earn it the trust, confidence, and appreciation of the American people and our overseas hosts.

Hall of Fame members are selected on an annual basis and honored each year at the AFPAA annual meeting. Each new member—or their family representative—receives a unique trophy commemorating the honoree's contributions to Air Force Public Affairs. Recognizing the significance of this special honor to the Public Affairs family, as you read elsewhere in this issue of *News and Notes*, AFPAA and SAF/PA worked together to install a permanent display at the Defense Information School, Fort Meade, Md.

The first fifteen members of the Hall of Fame—the "pioneers"—were announced by the AFPAA Board of Directors and SAF/PA on July 1, 2021. Since then, 23

more members were selected, including the most recent ones—the four members of the class of 2025.

Because of the AFPAA Board of Directors' decision to move the association's annual meeting from the fall to the spring, no annual meeting will be conducted until 2026. As a consequence, the members of the Classes of 2025 and 2026 will be inducted at the annual meeting in Fairfield, Calif., April 30 through May 2, 2026.



Mehmet Birbiri

Mehmet Birbiri—the first foreign national named to the Hall of Fame—has served as the host nation advisor in the public affairs office of the 39th

(cont'd on next page)

Air Base Wing at Incirlik AB, Turkey, since 1985, and has been an Air Force employee for 49 years. His community relations efforts have enhanced the image of the USAF and promoted international understanding and friendship.

He has deftly served as a bridge across often challenging political and cultural divides, always working to find common ground. His special combination of tact, diplomacy, effectiveness and dedication have been without equal.

His weekly "Ask Mehmet" column in the base newspaper helps airmen and their families understand and navigate the culture and customs of a foreign land and sets the standard for everyone in U.S. Air Forces in Europe.



Lt. Col. Daniel McGovern

Lieutenant Col. Daniel McGovern was one of America's pioneer combat cameramen. The son of a Royal Irish Constabulary sergeant, McGovern was born in Monaghan town but raised in Carrickmacross where he witnessed the Irish War of Independence unfold and then the partition of Ireland before his family emigrated to the United States in 1922.

He began his military service in 1928 with the Citizens Military Training Camp as soon as he was 18. He entered the National Guard in 1934 and was involved in aerial reconnaissance and mapping. In 1942, in the wake of Pearl Harbor, then Sgt. Dan McGovern served as cameraman and photographer to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt before establishing the USAAF Combat Camera Training School in famous filmmaker Hal Roach's former studios in Hollywood, Calif.

McGovern flew on dangerous B-17 bombing missions over Nazi-occupied Europe with the U.S. Eighth Air Force. He filmed considerable combat



Mehmet Birbiri (left), 39th Air Base Wing public affairs host nation advisor, and Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder, then Office of the Secretary of the Air Force director of PA, pose for a photo during a visit at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, Aug. 4, 2022. Early in his Air Force career, Ryder was stationed at Incirlik from 1994 to 1996, where he first met Mehmet, who has been working as the PA host nation advisor at Incirlik for about 45 years. The plaque behind Ryder and Mehmet symbolizes the PA career field badge and was a project they completed during Ryder's time at Incirlik as a lieutenant. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Joshua T. Crossman)



The News and Notes is your publication!

We encourage your submissions! Tell us your professional news, share a professional book review, express your thoughts and comments. Got an interesting career story? Share! Have interesting photos from your PA days? Share! Send submissions to Dick Cole, editor, at dickcole1853@verizon.net!



The opening frame of the technicolor William Wyler documentary "The Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress" released in 1944. Principal combat photography was accomplished by McGovern. (Courtesy Library of Congress)

footage on B-17 bombers for Hollywood director William Wyler's wartime documentary "The Memphis Belle: A Story of A Flying Fortress." (You can watch the film in the Library of Congress collection [here](#).) The 1990 feature film "Memphis Belle" was based on the original documentary on which he worked. He survived two crash-landings before deploying to the Pacific. He received a combat commission in October 1943.

He led the filming of the aftermath of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



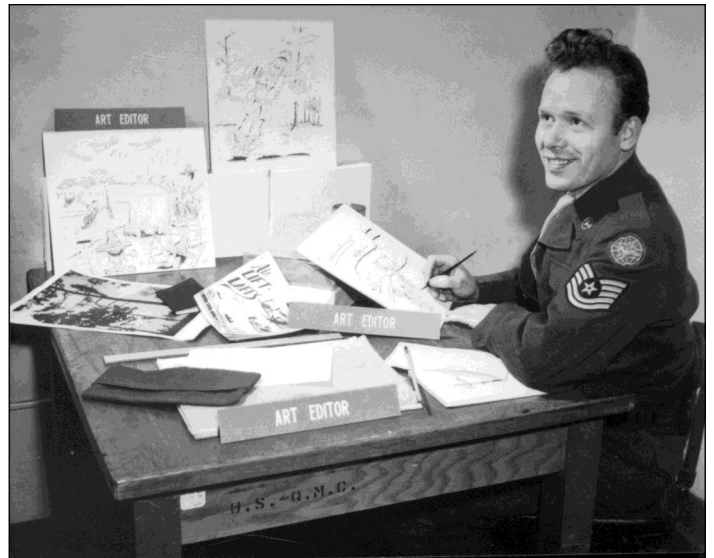
1Lt. McGovern on the ground in Nagasaki, Japan, photographing the damage after the dropping of the atomic bomb.

After WWII, he filmed rocket test experiments in America with former Nazi scientist Wernher Von Braun, compiled footage for *Project Bluebook* and lat-

er, filmed nuclear test detonations in the U.S. and at Pacific test sites. He retired from the Air Force in 1963 as the commander of the Audiovisual Squadron at Vandenburg AFB, Calif.

He has a very interesting oral history on the Library of Congress website, which you can view [here](#). It was filmed during an Aerospace Audiovisual Service conference at Norton Air Force Base, Calif., in 2003.

A biography was written about him by Joseph McCabe, [Rebels to Reels: A Biography of Combat Cameraman Daniel A. McGovern USAF](#), which was reviewed in the January 2023 issue of *News and Notes*.



Maj. John H. "Jake" Schuffert

Master Sgt. John H. "Jake" Schuffert made unique, valued and memorable contributions to the Air Force as its unofficial "humorist."

It all began during the Berlin Airlift. Schuffert, an aircraft radio operator, volunteered to do cartooning for the *Airlift Times* newspaper. His keen sense of humor and skill as a cartoonist soon made him one of the best known and remembered Air Force personalities.

He joined the U.S. Army Air Forces in 1941, serving as a B-24 radio operator and gunner in Europe. Shot down in late 1944, he spent the rest of the war with Yugoslav partisans evading German forces. He served in the Korean War and retired from active

(cont'd on next page)

duty in the 60's.

Jake then became a civilian graphic artist with the Command Services Unit at Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C., until retiring in 1986. Hundreds of his *Here's Jake* cartoons were published in the Air Force News Service, *Air Force Times*, *Air Force Magazine*, *Airman* and other popular periodicals. Multiple examples of his work can be found on Google under "Jake Schuffert."



Col. Harold "Hal" Smarkola

Colonel Harold "Hal" Smarkola served at all levels of Air Force Public Affairs, at home and abroad, and was personally involved in multiple key events and milestones for the Air Force.

His significant accomplishments are many. Here are just a few examples. He was responsible for the National Football League's Salute to the Air Force—a week-long celebration that recognizes and honors the Air Force. This event includes special promotions, activities, and displays at NFL stadiums, as well as a range of initiatives to thank the Air Force and support military families. Ultimately, this morphed into the current annual NFL's Salute to Service.

Smarkola was instrumental in naming the Holly-



Las Vegas Raiders kicker Daniel Carlson (2), safety Bryce Cosby (44), tight end Cole Fotheringham (85) and quarterback Chase Garbers (15) sign autographs for Air Force members from Creech Air Force Base during 2022 Air Force Week. (Photo by Jeffery Bennett/Las Vegas Raiders)

wood movie "Air Force One." As Chief, Public Affairs Assignments, he guided junior and senior PA personnel in making assignment choices that would help them advance their careers and get promoted.

As Air Force News Agency commander, Smarkola mentored countless enlisted men and women. They honored him by inducting him into the "Order of the Sword"—an honor awarded by noncommissioned officers to individuals held in high regard for their contributions to the enlisted corps. Few public affairs officers have served as commanders and he is the only one to receive this prestigious honor.

In his retirement, he is a passionate supporter of ABODE, a program offering home and compassionate care for terminally ill veterans. It is his mission to honor dying veterans; in his words, "I like to say we change people's lives, even at the end of their lives."



Smarkola visits a terminally ill veteran. (Courtesy photo)

News and Notes



BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

By Dick Cole
Editor

It's that time of the year again! AFPAA's by-laws call for an annual vote of the association's membership to ensure its leadership remains responsive to the needs of its members.

The association is led by a board of directors consisting of 13 voting members and one non-voting member. Voting members are elected to two-year terms, with approximately half of the board standing for election in alternate years. The non-voting member serves in an advisory capacity and is appointed by the SAF/PA Director and approved by the voting members of the board. This year we are electing five board members for a two-year term beginning July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2027. You may also cast write-in votes on the ballot.

Only Full Members in good standing (dues paid up-to-date) may vote. To be counted, all ballots must reach the AFPAA election committee by midnight Saturday, May 31, 2025.

You can choose one of two options for voting in this year's election. To vote online, use the online [ballot](#). When you vote online, your ballot is automatically sent to the association's election committee. You must submit your online ballot not later than midnight, Saturday, May 31. Please read the ballot instructions carefully to ensure your vote gets counted.

If a paper ballot is received through the mail from a member who has voted online, only the mailed in ballot will be counted.

If you prefer to vote by mail, you can use the paper ballot in this edition of the *News and Notes* on page 11. The ballot is preaddressed to reach Kathy McCollom, the elections committee chair, but you will need to fold it up and attach a first-class stamp. Remember, your ballot must be mailed in time to arrive no later than midnight, Saturday, May 31!

The Candidates



Julie Briggs

Julie Briggs is a life member of AFPAA. She was appointed by the Board of Directors to fulfill the second year of Tom Dolney's term when he resigned in 2020. Julie retired from 26 years of active duty in Public Affairs in 2012 as a senior master sergeant. Her assignments included wing and MAJCOM positions in Arizona, Colorado, Guam, South Carolina, Texas, Japan, Iraq, Turkey, the United Kingdom and at the U.S. Air Force Academy. She was the training department NCOIC at DINFOS when she left active duty to join the DINFOS faculty and teach the Public Affairs Qualification Course. Julie is a GS-14 and chief of policy, information, and records for the Defense Media Activity.



Jim McGuire

Jim McGuire served 26 years in the Air Force as a services officer, general's aide, and PA officer. After PA assignments at numbered air force and major command level, he was the deputy public affairs officer, U.S. Forces Korea, chief of the Air Force Press Desk, and USAFE director of public affairs. He retired as a colonel in 1997 and worked as a stockbroker for Morgan Stanley, a certified financial planner for USAA, and most recently as the director of volunteer services for New York City's Central Park. He maintains AFPAA's web site, and, with Hank Hufnagel, shared the 2014 Mike McRaney Distinguished

Service Award for managing AFPAA's endowment fund. He and his wife, Carla Sylvester, also a retired Air Force PA officer and a member of AFPAA's Board, live in West New York, N.J.



Perry Nouis

Perry Nouis is AFPAA's annual membership meeting coordinator and a past president and chairman of the board. He retired as a lieutenant colonel in 2005. During his 24-year career his assignments included director of public affairs at the U.S. Air Force Academy and chief, national affairs at Headquarters NORAD/U.S. Space Command. He was commander of American Forces

Network-Iraq in 2003 and a DINFOS public affairs instructor and chief of the school's broadcasting division. After retiring, Perry founded a state-licensed assisted living facility in his hometown of Little Falls, Minn. For two years, he co-hosted the politically-oriented "Up Front" program on KLTF-AM radio. Perry and his wife Jean live in Plymouth, Minn. They have four children and eight grandchildren.



Mike Paoli

Mike Paoli was the 1996 recipient of the AFPAA's "Best of the Best" award and a two-time team recipient of PRSA's Silver Anvil award. An AFPAA life member, and he is currently the civilian PA director for the 412th Test Wing at Edwards AFB, Calif. Mike's 20 active-duty years in Air Force PA earned him a reputation as a leading expert in risk and crisis communications.

He served on five aircraft accident investigations, including the Croatia crash that killed Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, responded on-scene to the Khobar Towers terrorist attack and led the Air Force Press Desk in the Pentagon. After active duty and before his current job, Mike was the chief communications officer for a Washington state utility, the founder of Tri-Cities Public Relations, and the president of PRSA's Mid-Columbia Chapter.



Phil Ratliff

Phil Ratliff is currently AFPAA's chief financial officer and has been a past president and chairman of the board. His Air Force career began in 1969. He was in the administration career field for 10 years followed by a tour in Turkey as aide-de-camp to the Chief of Staff, Central Treaty Organization. He began his PA career in 1979 and had assignments that included chief of public

affairs, 63rd Military Airlift Wing, Norton AFB, Calif.; the Media Relations Branch, SAF/PA; executive to the SAF/PA director, and Air University director of public affairs. Phil retired in 1991 as a lieutenant colonel. He then was the regional manager of Wisconsin Physicians Service Civilian Health and Medical Program for the Uniformed Services Select Program in Alabama and Mississippi and president and chief operating officer of Henley Memorial Company. Phil is a lifetime founding member of AFPAA.



Got Your Challenge Coin?



Challenge coins are traditionally given out to prove membership when challenged, to enhance morale and to be collected. AFPAA has continued that tradition with its own challenge coin. You can get the AFPAA Challenge Coin for a \$10 donation, plus \$9.95 for shipping and handling by going to <https://afpaaa.org/challengecoin.html>.

Read a good book lately that your colleagues should read?

Feel free to submit a review for publication in News and Notes! Send your submissions to editor Dick Cole at dickcole1853@verizon.net. Ideally, reviews should be 500 to 700 words.

2025 Election - AFPAA Board of Directors

Mail-in Ballot

This year's election will fill five seats on the Board of Directors. To vote, place an X in the box next to the declared or write-in candidates of your choice. You can vote for a total of, but not more than, five names. Please note that any ballot submitted with more than five names can not be counted.

To complete the voting process, please provide the contact information requested at the bottom of the ballot. You will not be able to submit the ballot unless your contact information entries (marked with a red asterisk) are filled in, as the Election Committee needs this information to verify that it is your ballot. For verification purposes, a member of the Election Committee may get in touch with you.



Julie Briggs



Jim McGuire



Perry Nouis



Mike Paoli



Phil Ratliff

Write-In #1

Write-In #2

Write-In #3

First and Last Name*

Email Address*

Phone*



BOARD OF DIRECTORS BALLOT

Postage
Stamp
Required

**Kathy McCollom
AFPAA Elections Chair
5099 Donovan Drive
Alexandria VA 22304-8620**



Rand presents Hart with AFPAA Hall of Fame Award

Retired Air Force former PA Director Ron Rand presented retired Brig. Gen. James W. Hart, Jr., with his AFPAA Hall of Fame Award in Florida, November 22, 2024. Hart was ill with COVID and unable to attend the association's annual meeting last October in San Antonio to be recognized as a member of the 2024 Hall of Fame class and receive his award. Rand and his wife, Berni, traveled from Texas to Florida to present Hart's award and spent the day with him. "Words alone are inadequate to express my thanks," said Hart. "It was a fun day and memories I shall cherish forever." (Photo by Berni Rand)



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PRSA



International Association
of Business Communicators

To earn the trust and confidence of the American people, the Air Force needs talented public affairs professionals who have the knowledge and expertise required in today's information environment. Programs offered by the [Public Relations Society of America \(PRSA\)](#) or the [International Association of Business Communicators \(IABC\)](#) can help Air Force PAs develop the advanced public relations skills that will enable them to provide expert communications counsel to commanders at all levels.

That's why AFPAA strongly supports membership in PRSA or IABC and urges PAs to earn the credentials these organizations offer. As part of its commitment to support the active force, AFPAA has established a stipend program to help PAs offset the costs involved in applying for accreditation by PRSA or certification by IABC.

Up to four stipends of \$250 each per fiscal year are available to Air Force personnel who successfully complete one of the PRSA or IABC credentialing programs. For more information, go to <https://afpaaa.org/prsa.html>. If you have any questions, contact us at scholarship@afpaaa.org.



Lynne and Jerry Renne at his January 24 retirement ceremony in the Pentagon. Retired former PA Director Maj. Gen. Ed Thomas, who has been friends with Renne for more than 30 years, presided over the retirement ceremony. Renne wears the Air Force Outstanding Civilian Career Service Award presented to him during the ceremony. (Photo by Lou Timmons)

Renne retires as Air Force Public Affairs Director

By Dick Cole
Editor

Jerry Renne retired January 24 as the Director of Public Affairs, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force. Renne served for 29 months as the Air Force's first civilian Public Affairs director.

Renne was serving as Deputy Public Affairs Director when Brig. Gen. Patrick S. Ryder was moved to the position as Department of Defense press secretary. Renne assumed the directorship in August 2022.

Former Air Force Public Affairs Director retired Maj. Gen. Ed Thomas presided over the ceremony, held in the Pentagon Press Briefing Room.

Renne's wife, Lynne, and three children were present for the ceremony. Renne was presented the Air

Force Outstanding Civilian Career Service Award and his wife pinned him with his retirement lapel pin.

Prior to entering civilian service, Renne spent 25 years as an officer in the Air Force. He retired as a colonel in May 2007. During his military career, Renne served as a Titan II intercontinental ballistic missile launch officer, ground-launched cruise missile launch officer, and airborne missile launch officer before transitioning into Public Affairs. As a military public affairs officer, Renne served as the chief, public affairs plans division and as chief, internal information division of Headquarters Air Force Material Center (1993-1994); director, public affairs, Air Force Development Test Center, Eglin AFB, Fla. (1994-1997); deputy chief, national affairs

division, Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs (1997-1998); public affairs advisor to the Air Force Chief of Staff (1998-2000); deputy director, Public Affairs, U.S. Air Forces in Europe (2000-2003); director, public affairs, Pacific Air Forces (2003-2005) and director, public affairs, U.S. Central Command (2005-2007).

Renne's first civilian public affairs position was strategic engagement senior advisor in U.S. Special Operations Command from 2007-2011. He then moved to U.S. Air Forces in Europe where he served from 2011-2017 as the director, public affairs and communication. In 2017, he assumed duties as the deputy director, Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs.

Brigadier Gen. Timothy A. "Allen" Herritage was promoted to the director position on January 7.



Right: Former Air Force Recruiting director and former Air Force public affairs director retired Maj. Gen. Ed Thomas presided over Renne's retirement ceremony. (Photo courtesy Col. Beth Horine)

Secretary of Defense Presides over Ceremony
Maj. Gen. Ryder retires as Pentagon Press Secretary

Air Force Maj. Gen. Patrick S. Ryder retired from the Air Force and his position as the Pentagon Press Secretary to retire following the change of administrations in Washington. Vacating the position allowed President Trump's new Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, who was confirmed January 24, to appoint his own Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs.

Sean Parnell, a former Army airborne ranger who served as a captain in the legendary 10th Mountain Division for six years, was selected to fill the position. Parnell received two Bronze Stars (one for valor) and the Purple Heart. He is the best-selling author of the Eric Steele series of fiction novels.



Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin presided over Maj. Gen. Patrick S. Ryder's retirement ceremony, January 25, in the Pentagon Press Briefing Room.

Ryder is remaining in the Washington, D.C., area, but has not announced his plans for post-service employment.

LORD GUARD AND GUIDE



**CLYDE CAREY
DECKARD**

Clyde Carey Deckard, Jr., former mobilization assistant to the director of public affairs, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Washington, D.C., died Jan. 14, 2025 in San Antonio, Texas.

He was born on Dec. 7, 1932, in Eastland, Texas, to Clyde C. Deckard, Sr., and Lora McGehee Deckard.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his son, Robert Carey Deckard.

He is survived by his wife, June Deckard; sons, Dean and wife Monica, Perry and wife Amy; grandchildren, Elizabeth Motl, Richard and wife Jaime, Lee and wife Sibyl, Darla Deckard; and great-grandchild, Clara Motl.

Deckard grew up living in sever-

al Texas towns, but he claimed Lampasas in central Texas and Whitesboro in North Texas as his hometowns.

He graduated from Whitesboro High School in 1950 having stayed there to finish high school after his parents moved to Denton in 1948.

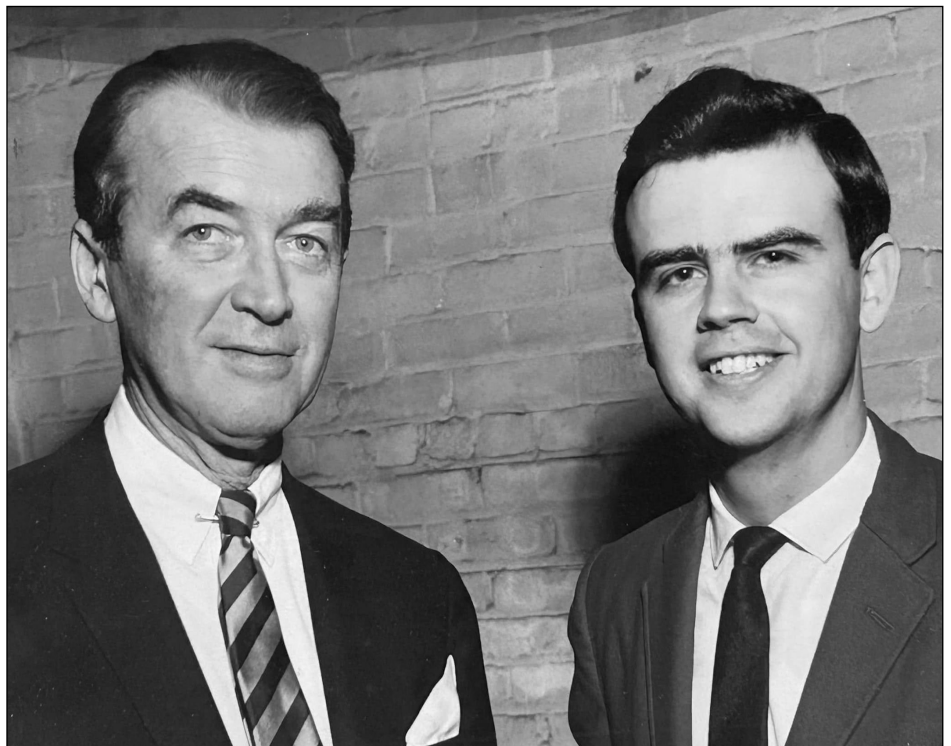
During his last year in school, he lived with his coach, Bo Reid and his wife Dorothy and played football, basketball, and baseball.

After graduation from high school, Carey visited Lampasas and renewed friendships and

began his career as a radio broadcaster on radio station KHIT.

This made it possible for him to work his way through college graduating from the University of Texas in Austin with a bachelor's degree in history. He later earned a master's degree in education administration from Our Lady of the Lake University.

Commissioned a second lieutenant through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program in June 1956, Deckard was assigned to Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, in January 1957, as a training officer and academic instructor in



Deckard poses with actor (and brigadier general in the Air Force Reserve) Jimmy Stewart. (Photo courtesy of the Deckard family)



One of Deckard's jobs was vice president of Fess Parker's (r.) production company, Fesspar, that produced NBC's "Daniel Boone" television show. (Photo courtesy of Deckard family)

Officer Candidate School. He returned to civilian status in October 1959.

In February 1961, he became an active member of the Air Force Reserve when he assumed the position of information officer for the 433rd Troop Carrier Wing, Kelly Air Force Base, Texas. He was assigned as information officer of the 921st Military Airlift Group, Kelly Air Force Base, in September 1966, and was called to active duty with the unit for 16 months, in January 1968, as a result of the Pueblo Crisis.

Deckard became the individual mobilization augmentee to the information office of the 12th Flying Training Wing, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, in June 1970. In October 1971 he was assigned as individual mobilization augmentee to the office of information, Head-

quarters Air Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base. He became the mobilization assistant to SAF/PA in February 1981 and held the position until his retirement in June 1988.

Deckard's life was filled with a variety of interests and activities in which he utilized his abilities as a "communicator and personality." These included his time spent as a radio and television personality, master of ceremonies, actor, singer, public relations specialist (including the opening of a number of San Antonio's major buildings and world's fair (Hemis-Fair'68), aviation (pilot & instructor), Air Force officer, teacher, taking care of his wife and sons, active in sports as a player and coach, helping others and serving God as a church participant and Sun-

day school teacher.

Deckard's employment career included many years as a radio and television personality; vice president of Fess Parker's production company, Fesspar, that produced NBC's "Daniel Boone" television show; director of radio & television promotion for Hemis-Fair '68—the 1968 World's Fair and vice president and director of public relations for three major financial institutions.

Following the decline of the financial industry, he became assistant executive director of the Institute of Texan Cultures concluding his full-time employment by retiring in January 1997.

His civic affiliations included membership in the San Antonio Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, national board of directors of the Air Force Historical Foundation and the Texas Public Relations Association. He was one of the original organizers of the first "Armed Forces Week" in the nation which has been continued by the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce. In conjunction with the chamber, he served as chairman of the Armed Forces Week Task Force, chairman of the Reserve and Guard subcommittee, chairman of the Energy Conservation Marketing Task Force and member of the steering committee of the Military Affairs Council. He is a past vice president of public relations for the Texas Air Force Association, past president of the San Antonio Advertising Federation and a former 10th District director of the American Advertising Federation. He re-

(cont'd on next page)

ceived the Air Force Association National Merit Award and "Awards of Excellence" from the Industrial Editors' Association for Armed Forces Week publicity campaigns. Other awards included the Air Training Command's Outstanding Air Force Reserve mobilization augmentee for 1973, a first-place National Public Service Award from the American Advertising Federation, and the "Silver Spur" Award from the Texas Public Relations Association.

Carey and wife, June, were married for 70 years.

Deckard's funeral service was held Jan. 28, 2025. His interment ceremony was held at the Oakwood Cemetery, Whitesboro, Texas, the following day.

If so desired, donations can be made to the Texas Air Museum, Stinson Chapter, 1234 99th St., San Antonio, TX 78214. You are invited to leave a memory or write a condolence [here](#).

Always calm in every storm. You were a great leader and good friend. You will be missed, but NOT forgotten!

—Rick Fuller

I went to the celebration of life service for Carey Deckard and said farewell to a very good friend of almost 45 years. I worked with Brig. Gen. Deckard in the late 70s and early 80s when he would come up to the Pentagon to serve his Reserve duty assigned to Brig. Gen. Abel. We shared many a lunchtime basketball game at the POAC. It was absolutely amazing seeing his wife, June, today after almost 40 years. We recognized each other instantly! It was a beautiful

ceremony, and it featured some pretty incredible memories of Carey's life! A wonderful, wonderful man!

— Hal Smarkola

A gentleman and a real pro!

— John Gura

The Air Force community just lost a true gentleman and a great public servant.

— Joe Purka

So sorry to hear that Carey passed.

— Terry Arnold

Great leader, great guy. A salute to a veteran public information officer!

— Tom Halbert




**JOSEPH TERRY
RINELLA**

Founding member Joseph Terry Rinella passed November 18, 2024. He served as a Reservist in the Air Force Public Affairs office in Los Angeles and SAF/PA dur-

I Can Neither Confirm Nor Deny

The Life of a Military Spokesman

MICHAEL PIERSON



I Can Neither Confirm Nor Deny is now available in the Amazon Kindle store and will soon be available in paperback. If AFPAA members purchase the book and leave a short review on Amazon mentioning AFPAA, author Michael Pierson will donate the profits from their sale to the AFPAA scholarship fund.

Hurricane Katrina. 9/11. The occupation of Iraq. The air war over Afghanistan. Humanitarian operations in Central America and Africa. Creating Space Force. From the War on Drugs in Honduras to the creation of a new military service, Michael Pierson was there as a spokesperson for the United States Air Force and Department of Defense. His light-hearted, but often dramatic, storytelling brings readers into the life of an American Airman, growing up in Ohio, raising a family in the military, and experiencing history as an insider for more than three decades.

ing Operation Desert Storm.

He died following a lengthy illness. He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Nan, son Ryan, daughter-in-law Hilary, and granddaughter Mary Macall of Dallas.

During his active Air Force service, he principally served as a munitions officer in Okinawa, Massachusetts, Vietnam and Hawaii.

His celebration of life was held January 25 at The Public House in Amarillo.



If you wish to send a letter to the editor, you may do so by email at dickcole1853@verizon.net or by snail mail at:
Dick Cole
10600 Krenmore Lane
Chester, VA 23832-9202



Are you a member of the AFPAA Facebook page?

Herritage named new Public Affairs Director

By Dick Cole
Editor

Brigadier Gen. Timothy A. "Allen" Heritage was named director, Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs in January upon the retirement of Jerry Renne.

Prior to his selection as public affairs director, Herritage had served for 26 months as the deputy director.

Herritage briefly served as the public affairs advisor to the chief of space operations prior to being assigned as the deputy director.

He has served as a mission support group commander, a combat camera squadron commander and in various positions as a public affairs officer at the wing, center, numbered Air Force, major command and headquarters levels, as well as joint tours. He has deployed to Haiti in support of humanitarian exercises, Kyrgyzstan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom



Brig. Gen. Allen Herritage became the new Air Force Public Affairs Director in January. (Air Force Photo)

and to Iraq twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The general entered the Air Force through the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, in 1997 after receiving a degree in English. He possesses three advanced degrees: Master of Public Administration, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Okla.; Master of Military Operational Art and Science, Air University, Maxwell AFB, Ala.; and Master of Strategic Studies with academic distinction, Air University, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

Dalton Scholarships Still Available!

There's still time to apply for one of the five \$1,000 scholarships offered by the Air Force Public Affairs Association. Applications for the Dalton Scholarship are due by May 31.

All active, Reserve, and Guard 3NXXX or 35X members and Air Force civilians in a core public affairs occupational series or assigned to a public affairs office are eligible. Apply [here](#).



P. O. Box 2446
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FIRST CLASS POSTAGE

AF Public Affairs Association MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to the following new members of the association:

- Heather Scott

Life Members

- Brandon Lingle
- SSgt Zoie Cox (2025 Brig. Gen. James W. Hart, Jr., Award Winner)

Our membership as of this publication is 476. This is comprised of:

- 58 Lifetime Founders
- 242 Life Members
- 31 Best of the Best Life Members
- 3 Payment Plan Life Member
- 137 Annual Members
- 2 Adjunct Life Members

- 2 Adjunct Members
- 1 Affiliate Member

The association has 25 members who did not renew their memberships thus far in 2025. All members who did not renew have had their access to the password-protected association webpages terminated.

The association currently has 20 civilian employee members and 37 members who are active-duty or serving in the Guard, Reserve, or Civil Air Patrol.

Did you know that the association has lost 24 of our founding members over the past 11 years?

