

# FHWA RETIREES NEWSLETTER

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## FOR THE FHWA RETIREE ORGANIZATION LOOKING AHEAD--IT'S ALL GOOD NEWS

In this edition we bring you an overview of the delayed, but very successful, reunion held in Boise in late April. Steve Moreno, chair of the reunion committee, gives an up close and personal view of the event. There is also an expanded report on the special recognition given to Jim

Cheatham. We provide a snapshot of our organizational updates, a look at our finances, some news from FHWA and news of next year's reunion at Virginia Beach, including the work that is underway to make it a reunion that you will not want to miss.

## FHWA Retirees Reunion – Boise, Idaho April 2023 Report by Steve Moreno

The 33<sup>rd</sup> FHWA Retirees Reunion was successfully held in Boise on April 23-27, 2023, after two false starts in 2020 and 2021. Those were cancelled due to Covid 19. Seventy attendees from all around the nation gathered for a great time of reflection, visiting and sightseeing.

The main event was held at The Riverside Hotel along the rapidly flowing banks of the Boise River. A storm laden winter season deposited twice the normal snow load on the

Mountains surrounding Treasure Valley. The late spring caused cool temperatures and high runoff into the Boise River. The positive side was that attendees didn't get overheated on the long walk from the front desk to the hospitably room; some reported it was 0.4 miles! That may have been an exaggeration, but the walk did help balance the many liquid and snackable calories consumed while dining and chatting with old and new friends.



Idaho Capitol

First time attendee, Frank Tooke, hosted the traditional Jack Wilkes Memorial golf tournament on Monday. Frank arranged the event and was dealt with unusual circumstances. This year there were 12 participants plus an unusual surprise. Tee times were adjusted to beat the annual crossing of the sheep across Idaho Highway 55. It's not every state that closes their main north-south highway to let the sheep saunter across the road to get to summer grazing grounds in the hills. The evening closed with a delicious reception followed by more time in the hospitality room. The traditional reunion 1000-piece puzzle was beginning to take shape. This one, while looking like a nice retirement camping trailer, was mostly in shades of green, beige, and blue. Fun for some!

The tours on Tuesday seemed to be well received by all. No one slept-in and the coach left for NIFC, the National Interagency Fire Center. This unassuming facility, spread out over several acres and many buildings, coordinates seven major Federal, State, and Tribal agencies. NIFC provides international support to Canada, Mexico, Australia, and New Zealand. NIFC firefighters are currently assisting Canadian firefighters. Our access to the facility was assisted by Chuck Chappel's wife, Ingrid who worked at NIFC.

NIFC staff provide and maintain hundreds of mobile weather stations and thousands of pieces of radio equipment (they go through 25,000 AA batteries a day on some fires). The NIFC warehouse has \$35M of ready-to-go emergency MREs, sleeping bags, axes, shovels – whatever a fire crew might need – all pre-packaged and ready to ship anywhere. NIFC also trains and houses BLM smoke jumpers, who among their other physical qualifications make their own custom Kevlar firefighting suits. It wasn't just our women who were impressed with these good looking, physically fit guys who also know how to sew.



Smoke Jumper Instruction

Our lunch stop was at The Village at Meridian, a beautiful shopping mall with many wonderful restaurants surrounding a large fountain. Afterwards, we drove to the Warhawk Museum in nearby Nampa, Idaho for some interesting presentations by retired military personnel who added great depth to the displays and aircraft with their own personal stories. Tuesday concluded with folks enjoying dinner at various restaurants in Boise followed by more time in the hospitality room visiting, puzzling and snacking. Our guests participated in the traditional raffle and silent auction. There were quite a few donated raffle items with sales more than \$1000.

Wednesday's events included the "Business" Meeting and the evening Family Dinner with free time in between. George Ostensen moderated the morning meeting with his usual wit and collection of jokes. This time many started with "You know you might be in Idaho if ..." George introduced the Retiree Board. Lyle Renz, current chair, announced that he was stepping down but continuing on the Board. George had been nominated to take his place. Steve Moreno will step into George's moderator position. Phil Miller will remain as Treasurer, and he announced that we still have ample funds to help support more reunions. Rita Steinke, Kevin Heanue and Joyce Ritter remain on the board and Jerry Heimbuch comes on as a one-year member as a representative of this year's reunion. Al Steger serves as our webmaster and manages our mailing list.

George then introduced the Boise host committee who received an enthusiastic round of applause: Steve and Carol Moreno, Jerry and Carol Heimbuch, Chuck Chappell and Frank Tooke.

The highlight of the meeting came when Major General James (Jim) Cheatham, (Ret.) was called to the front of the room. He was presented with a handmade star and stripes quilt in recognition of his many years of military service. He was stunned that his wife Joann could keep this presentation a secret for more than a year. (See the following article for more complete coverage.)

During Wednesday's free time folks went to a variety of places including downtown Boise, the Capitol building, local museums and Idaho City, a nearby gold town. About 20 of our group went to The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey just

a few miles south of Boise. They arrived in time to catch a raptor free flight time show. The work the Peregrine fund has done and is doing in 40 countries around the world is impressive. After helping restore the Bald Eagle and the Peregrine Falcon, they have been instrumental in working with California condors. The C condors were down to 22 birds when the last wild ones were captured for breeding. There are now many more that have been restored back into the wild from the breeding program with many more still in the local rearing program.

Wednesday evening concluded with a buffet dinner at the Riverside. Steve Moreno introduced Frank Tooke who announced the golf winners and Pete Hartman, the Idaho Division Administrator, who gave us an update on how the agency is getting along post Covid, followed by a Q&A session. While it all sounds fine, no one reupped for another 30 years of service.

Entertainment was provided by *Oinkaria*, a very athletic and colorful troupe of Basques dancers. Outside of the Basque Provence itself, Boise is home to the



Basque Dancers

largest concentration of Basque peoples.

After the wonderful meal and program, attendees returned to the hospitality room to complete the puzzle, eat the last of the munchies and pick up their raffle winnings.

We all owe a special thanks to those who donated such nice items to help fund future reunions. If you haven't been attending these, please try to make the next one planned for Virginia Beach in 2024. No matter your GS level or specialty, we all worked together to help bring the nation a great system of highways, and it is fun to relive some of those days and renew long lost acquaintances. Based upon our collection and analysis of the data, we have concluded that we held a successful

reunion. Our total number of complaints was ZERO. It was a great pleasure to put this together for all of your Boise Reunion Committee: Steve and Carol Moreno, Jerry and Carol Heimbuch, Chuck Chappell and Frank Tooke.



Idaho Scenery

## Surprise Honor for Jim Cheatham

Expanding on coverage of the business meeting where General James Cheatham was honored, there is a national organization, the "Quilt of Valor Foundation," that provides a means of recognizing veterans who have provided exemplary service to our country. During our reunion in Illinois in 2019, several attendees, aware of the organization, got together and suggested that FHWA's own Jim Cheatham should be nominated for that recognition. They quietly put their heads together and made the nomination.

The beautifully crafted quilt was made by Mary Herbold, wife of retiree Keith Herbold.



Quilt of Valor

(L to R) Sharon White, Gary White, George Ostensen, Joann Cheatham and the honoree James Cheatham, Major General, U.S. Army (Ret.)

Jim had incredible dual careers, both beginning in 1971, when he graduated from Prairie View A&M with a BS in Civil Engineering and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Reserve. He later also received a Master of Science in Civil Engineering from Purdue University. His advanced military education includes the Command and General Staff College and the US Army War College. He touched many bases in many places in FHWA, including serving as Division Administrator in Pennsylvania and in the District of Columbia. His last assignment before retiring in August 2013 was as Director of Planning in the Washington office.

He also rose through the ranks in the military achieving the rank of Major General. From March-August 2003 and July 2005-March 2006 Major General Cheatham was on active duty and was assigned as Acting Director of Military Programs and Deputy Chief of Engineers-

Reserve Components, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington, D.C. His military career encompassed 37 years, retiring in 2009 from the U.S. Army Reserves



General Cheatham

## Plans for 2024 Reunion in Norfolk, Virginia are Moving Ahead

A steering committee is being organized, contacts made with the business community, conference calls held, and

emails exchanged. Currently an early fall date is being explored. We will provide updates as planning progresses.

## The Remarkable Three Generation BPR/FHWA Careers of the Sullivans

At the end of July, John Fallon Sullivan III retired from FHWA as the North Carolina Division Administrator ending a long tradition in the Sullivan family. His grandfather John F. Sullivan joined BPR in

1929 and retired as Virginia Division Administrator in 1969. His father John F. Sullivan, Jr. joined FHWA in 1958 and retired in 1991 as Division Administrator in Mississippi.

The Sullivan's all carried the same name, all went to VMI, and all joined BPR/FHWA having graduated from the same college,

and all retired as Division Administrators. Their service covered a total of 111 years and spanned 74 consecutive years.

## FHWA Retiree Organizational Update

The organization beginning in 1988 has organized 33 reunions throughout the country and more than 3,600 retirees, families and friends have attended. After all these years of successful experience, including the recent COVID years, we are happy to report that our finances are strong. After two post COVID reunions we have set a course for the years to come. At their meeting in Boise, the Executive Board nominated, and the attendees at the Business meeting approved, the following leadership changes. Lyle Renz announced

he was retiring as chair but staying on the Executive Board. He was recognized for his leadership during the most difficult years in our history. George Ostensen will be our new chair; Steve Moreno will follow George as moderator at the annual business meeting. Other members include, Phil Miller, Treasurer; Kevin Heanue, Newsletter editor; Joyce Curtis; Rita Steinke; and Jerry Heimbuch comes on as representative of this year's reunion. Al Steger remains our webmaster and maintains our mailing list.

## Please keep your contact information current

If you have moved and changed address or have a new email address, or if you received this newsletter from a friend and want to get on the email list, please let us know. Send an email to [fhwaretires@gmail.com](mailto:fhwaretires@gmail.com) with the following information: name, street address, telephone number, email address, years worked at FHWA, year retired, and spouse's name (if applicable). You can also add alternate email, address, and phone number. If you are so inclined, send a copy of this newsletter to a fellow retiree who is not on our mailing list and suggest that they sign up.

If you are not getting *FHWA News*, you can get on the mailing list or make a change in

your contact information. Provide your name and street address to:

[Greggmiller@dot.gov](mailto:Greggmiller@dot.gov).

### Don't forget our website!

We invite you to look at our website, which is being updated throughout the year. For example, if you go to the section on the Boise reunion, you can see a video of Jim Cheatham being recognized for his military service.

The address is <https://fhwa-retirees.org>

Comments can be sent to [fhwaretires@gmail.com](mailto:fhwaretires@gmail.com).