

# Bob's Family At DINFOS As Christie Vanover Gets First AFPAAA Bob Brus Award



The first presentation of The Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association Lt.. Col. Robert "Bob" Brus Award for Outstanding Performance was made July 2 to Christie Vanover at the Defense Information School, Fort Meade, Maryland. Attending the ceremony were Bob's family; sons Matt, Andy, and Ryan, and wife Judy.

Christie Vanover, Command Information Officer, U.S. Army Garrison, Benelux, Chieveres, Belgium, is the third recipient of the award but the first to receive it since AFPAAA offered \$1,000 for its sponsorship. Initial funding of the award was by members of the DINFOS faculty and staff and friends of Bob.

Names of the recipients of the award are placed on a permanent plaque that hangs in the hallway of DINFOS. Each individual winner is presented with a smaller plaque highlighting their achievement.

Bob Brus was a Lifetime Member of AFPAAA who died at 66 on March 23, 2009. He retired from the Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1994. He was director of community relations for an advertising and public relations firm before joining the faculty and staff of the DINFOS in the school's Public Affairs Leadership Department in November 2003.

The award recognizes his work as an instructor for the in-resident Public Affairs Qualifying Course (PAQC) and as a member of the team developing the new PAQC distributed learning course, designed primarily for Guard and Reserve officers. The course is conducted twice each year. It

involves teaching military and civilian public affairs officers the fundamentals of military public affairs. The students learn doctrine and theory as well as hands-on practical application in all facets of military public affairs. Members of all four military services, O-1 to O-6, E-6 and above, and civilians, both inside and outside DoD attend.

"The Brus Award is given to the student graduating from each class of the Public Affairs Qualification Course—Advanced Distributed Learning who best exemplifies the qualities of unrivaled positive attitude, steadfast motivation, team building, and unwavering professionalism that were Bob's hallmarks," DINFOS Provost and former AFPAAA board chairman Mike Gannon explained

The award is not based on grade point average or standing in the class. During the two-week resident portion of the course, the instructors decide which student best exhibits the traits that Bob embodied.

"Bob dedicated more than five years at the Defense Information School where he spearheaded the development of the Advanced Distributed Learning program for the Public Affairs Qualification Course," Gannon said.

## Not Too Early For Annual Meeting Travel Planning

Halloween is weeks away, Turkey Day two months off, and we haven't even stocked up on Alka-Seltzer for the morning of January 1 – so why think about AFPAAA's Annual Membership Meeting May 12-14?

Here are three reasons: 1. Travel costs have been rising and the closer you let it get to your depart to book your ticket the bigger the impact on your wallet; 2. It is graduation time and proud moms and dads will be on the move, so seats may be at a premium; 3. It is the start of vacation time; fares for that season are usually higher.

While Bud Ross and his committee haven't got the costs of meals and lodgings for the Hilton Garden Inn in Fairfield, California; Travis AFB, and the winery visit nailed down yet, right now relatively low airline fares are readily available on the web.

A check of Orbitz showed from the likes of San Antonio, Washington, D.C., and Orlando, Florida, round-trip fares in the \$300-\$400 range, including taxes and fees, are available. As you search for the best deal, you might want to remember that three arrival airports – San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose – are available. We found there was quite a difference in price depending on which one we checked.

If you have the time and a few extra bucks, consider the train. You'll be riding the rails in luxury, and there is some great scenery going cross-country to San Francisco. Drop AFPAAA's railroad guru Pete Hefler an e-mail at PrH40@aol.com or call him at (508) 693-6358. Pete can steer you through the world of Amtrak.

# Chris Hoppin's "Same Date Of Rank" Chronicles That Academy Class Rank Has No Bearing On Successful Military And Civilian Careers

Unique is the proper word to describe *Same Date of Rank*, authored by AFPAAA member Chris Hoppin. What makes the book unique is its subject, what it contains and what it omits, as well as the overall presentation. It is an interesting and pleasurable read.

Conceived from his experiences as an Admissions Liaison Officer for the United States Air Force Academy (Hoppin's career after being a Public Affairs Officer), *Same Date of Rank* chronicles what happened to a select group of graduates from all the military academies – but with a twist. The stories told are of 20 academy graduates, many of whom were at or near the top of their class and some who were at or near the bottom of their class.

With one notable exception, Admiral Carlisle A. H. Trost, who became Chief of Naval Operations, unless during your career you happened to run across one of the others whose story is told, the subjects of the book are not particularly prominent. That was by design.

You won't find extensive discussion of the "big" names such as MacArthur and Lee who were first and second in their classes; Patton and Eisenhower, who were toward the middle of their classes, or Senator McCain, who was six above the last man in his class. Nevertheless, sprinkled throughout the book is ample information about the undergraduate, military, and civilian careers of these and many other prominent graduates

The author did a very thorough job, spending several years with the assistance of the academies' alumni groups canvassing graduates and so-

liciting their cooperation in putting the book together. The 20 graduates whose stories are told in detail span the classes from 1942 to 1999.

Chris' approach was simple, taken as a group, graduates of the service academies, whether they were at the top or the

that point. He was the first in his class to wear a general officer star.

Despite that approach, Chris found a natural reluctance to "toot their own horns" among many that were contacted, even those who ranked high in their class, and especially among those who were in the lower echelon at graduation. But he

was determined and with the assistance of referrals by classmates that led to individuals who were willing to have their stories told the book was completed.

This is a book that really has no beginning or ending. You might want to skip the introduction – it is a bit lengthy – for later and peruse the first profile, John Crowley's story. Or, read the unique father and daughter Air Force Academy graduates stories; both #1 militarily in their class, one a lawyer, the other an A-10 pilot. If you prefer seeing how someone got to the top, Admiral Trost could be your first reading.

Any of the profiles can be your starting point; it reads well no matter where you begin.

For the "big" names over the past one-hundred years or so, the last chapter has a lot of information that will be of interest, and there is general admission information.

*Same Date of Rank* is available in both print and Kindle editions either of which can be obtained via our web site at: [www.AFPAAA.org](http://www.AFPAAA.org) – just click on PA Store and link to Amazon and place your order - AFPAAA will get a rebate.



bottom of their class had, with rare exception, been successful in their military and post service careers. That was because the academies recruited exception young people and class rank did not brand a graduate a winner or loser.

John D. Crowley, Jr., last in the USMA class of '42, clearly illustrates

## From The President's Pen



*At the July AFPAAA board meeting, I was appointed chairman of the Membership Development Committee with the task of determining how we can expand our membership to include, once again, evaluating a name change. I have asked Dave Shea and Neil Buttimer to serve on that committee. Each comes to the committee with strong skills, wisdom, and solid credibility. When we complete our review, we will make recommendations to the board. I will keep you informed of our progress. We welcome any and all inputs. Send your comments to me at [usafross@aol.com](mailto:usafross@aol.com)*

*In my last message, I urged those of you near bases to visit your PA offices and offer to be their eyes and ears in your local community. I had the opportunity to do that recently. I learned far more than imparting any valuable perspective.*

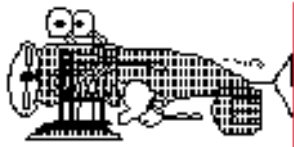
*Today's public affairs force faces bigger challenges than ever with staff shortages, deployments, and junior people filling senior positions. One area that can quickly suffer is base-community relations. It is also an area where a little help from those who once served can be a great benefit. You can be valuable mentors and I ask you again to make the effort.*

*California here we come! Save the dates May 12-14, 2011 for the next AFPAAA Annual Membership Meeting in Fairfield, home of Travis AFB, the largest Air Mobility Base in our Air Force. Get re-blued with tours of the host flying wing, the 60th Air Mobility Wing, its Reserve partner, the 349th Air Mobility Wing, and one of the newest wings in the Air Force, the 615th Contingency Response Wing. Take a tour of the Jelly Belly Candy Company and enjoy a wine tasting event.*

*There is plenty of free parking at our meeting headquarters, the Hilton Garden Inn, and you can walk from there to at least a half dozen restaurants. For your shopping needs the Westfield Shopping Mall is next door. Fly into Sacramento, Oakland, or San Francisco, or, if so inclined, take Amtrak and get off at nearby Suisun City train terminal.*

*Arrive three days prior to the meeting or stay three days after and take advantage of our special rate - the same as military per diem - at the Hilton Garden Inn. Then you can tour the Napa and Sonoma wine region for one third to one fourth the normal lodging cost. Look for all the details and your registration form in the January News & Notes.*

*— Bud Ross*



## Prop Wash & Jet Blast



**Welcome Aboard To . . . William J. Bryan Lewis, Travis T. Taylor, and Frank Urben.**

**New Lifer . . .** we recognize **Constance A. Custer**, who upgraded her membership status.

**Vets Book Online . . .** the 2010 edition of the *Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors* booklet is available online at [www1.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book.asp](http://www1.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp) Topics covered include VA pensions, home loans, medals and records, special veterans groups, and other federal benefits. View chapters and sections, or download the entire handbook, in English or Spanish, in .pdf format.

**The Missing Centurion. . .** we inadvertently omitted **Phil Ratliff** from the list in our last issue of *Centurions* those who donated to the AFPAAA endowment fund during the preceding 12 months.

**A Page Of Aviation History Turns . . .** Boeing Plant #2, opened in 1936, where about half the WW II B-17s were built, is being demolished this fall. It was where the B-29, B-47, B-52, and first 737 were developed. When the site is leveled it will create five acres of wetlands in Seattle's Duwamish River area.

**And The Music Goes Round And Round . . .** at the American Legion convention in 1957, Major Robert M. Crawford - the guy who wrote the Air Force Song - wrote a march, "The Loyal Legionaire(sic)," and dedicated it to Olympia, Washington's legion band, which he played with during summer vacations. Gil Carbone, a drummer with the band, documented this in "A Band For All Seasons," a history of Olympia's Legion Band. Gil, an educator, also served 13 years on the Olympia City Council, retiring in 1992. So what's this got to do with AFPAAA? Well, when Carbone retired his seat on the council was take by AFPAAA Secretary Mark Foutch.

## Directory Updates



## Directory Updates

### Additions:

#### **William J. Bryan Lewis**

Capt (Associate) 4404 Brookside Dr., Alexandria VA 22312, (843) 509-3443; Business: Walter Reed Medical Center, 6900 Georgia Ave., Washington DC 20307, (202) 782-8560; E-mail: [wjblewis@gmail.com](mailto:wjblewis@gmail.com).

#### **Travis T. Taylor**

GS-11 (Retired 1989) 7815 Shady Hollow Lane, San Antonio TX 78255, (210) 695-8127; E-mail: [tt.mm@att.net](mailto:tt.mm@att.net).

#### **Frank Urben**

Lt Col (Retired 1995) 2405 Eddystone Road, Raleigh NC 27612, (919) 510-8803, Business: DINFOS, Fort Meade MD 20755, (301) 677-7597; E-mail: [Frank.urban@gmail.com](mailto:Frank.urban@gmail.com).

### Directory Changes:

#### **Sandra Burr**

Lt Col (Retired: 2010); Business: Creative Memories

#### **Constance A. Custer (Life Member)**

#### **Rick Fuller (Life Member)**

MSgt. (Ret. 1991), Business: Eagle Auction & Realty, Inc., Graham, NC 27253; E-mail: [wfuller1@triad.rr.com](mailto:wfuller1@triad.rr.com)

#### **Mike Kinchen**

Business: DMA-SA Director of Operations, 203 Norton St., San Antonio TX 78241-6105, (210) 925-6161; Fax: (210) 925-8862; [mike.kinchen@dma.mil](mailto:mike.kinchen@dma.mil).

#### **Dick Koch**

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#### **Lynn Ligon**

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#### **Tom Maloney**

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#### **Beverly Harris Simmons**

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#### **Jeffrey Lynn Whitted**

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# WW II Vet, PR Pro Honored By Air Force For Advocacy Work In New York City

With his wife looking on, 90-year-old Chester Burger was presented the Distinguished Public Service Award by Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley on August 24, in New York City.

The recognition was for his 15 years of volunteer service as an Air Force advocate under the Public Affairs Advisory Group in New York City.

“You have strengthened local and national support for vital Air Force programs, strategies and missions,” Secretary Donley said while presenting the award. “Bringing together New York City’s brightest public relations’ minds provided unparalleled advice and counsel to former Air Force secretaries. Thank you for your dedication and all that you have done for the Air Force.”

Mr. Burger is a World War II veteran, the nation’s first TV news reporter, the president of the nation’s first communications management consulting firm, and he worked for more than 50 years as a public relations professional, educator and consultant. For the past 15 years, his goal has been to get public relations professionals from New York City to help tell the Air Force story and help Air Force leaders shape their communication strategies.

“The prevailing attitude 15 years ago was that New York was just marginal to the Pentagon and the Beltway. What we tried to do most of all



was to convince Air Force leaders that New York City was the media capital of the country,” Mr. Burger said. “It was terribly important not just to have Air Force ceremonies and parades, but also to cultivate relationships with the key people in New York so they would understand the responsibilities the Air Force and what it was doing for the national defense.

“I think it’s hard for people in the service to realize how isolated the military is from the civilian community,” he said.

“For instance, there is no military base in New York City, the result is if you are a civilian in New York, you don’t know anyone from the military. There’s no base nearby, and there’s no sense of who (military members) are, what they are doing, what their burdens are, or the sacrifices they are making.”

During the week Burger was honored, dubbed Air Force Week New York City, Airmen engaged members of the local community through volunteer events, concerts and exhibits to educate them on Air Force life and showcase the Air Force’s capabilities.

During the week, New Yorkers learned about the “training and the responsibility” that Mr. Burger said he admires so much.

“I had an incident a couple of years ago, when a general said to me, ‘You see that plane over there,

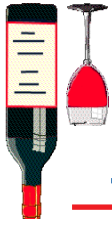
that’s mine,’ It cost I don’t know how many millions of dollars,” Mr. Burger said. “Then (the general) said, ‘... you see that kid over there, 25-years old, he takes care of it for me. I don’t worry about it. I know it’s going to be done right, 100 percent right. I never worry.’

“You wouldn’t find that in civilian life. You wouldn’t find first of all a 25-year-old with that kind of life and death responsibility, and you wouldn’t find somebody knowing that it’s going to be done right 100 percent of the time. That’s the wonderful thing about the Air Force,” Mr. Burger said

“There is nobody that I met in my long life, and I’m about to be 90, that has the sense of responsibility, public service, and real integrity and meaning than the folks I’ve worked with in the Air Force and what a rich experience that has been,” he added.

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May 12-14, 2011

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