
Geodetic Survey Squadron/Group, Newsletter #79, 1 December 2018, Distribution 8

1 message

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Greetings, Fellow Veterans of the Geodetic Survey Squadron and Geodetic Survey Group!

And here's to a happy month of end-of-year holidays!

This newsletter is just a postscript to my earlier newsletter in mid-November, so it will be short. I had hoped to have some news for those of you who have been waiting for back-ordered coins and pendants. But first a word of recognition...

This past week NASA made another brilliant landing on Mars with a new lab that should make our fellow geodetic veterans proud! The InSight science lab successfully soft-landed on the Martian surface on Nov. 26, 2018 at 2:52:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time) after a nearly seven-month journey that began at Vandenberg AFB, CA, last May. InSight is short for Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport, and will soon begin a months-long process of robotically deploying several science instruments to study the geophysical layers of Mars. They will use seismic signals to study the layers making up the planet's, crust, mantle and core, measuring "marsquakes" to create a 3-D picture of the Martian interior. Another geodetic experiment will check to determine if Mars has a 'polar wobble' similar to Earth's and, if so, how much of one. Scientists expect that knowledge to advance understanding about the evolution of planets, including Earth and planets orbiting other stars. Our thanks go to GSS veteran **Ron Lecki** for sending a link from *Aviation Week* on the Mars InSight landing.

Update on the GSS/GSG Commemorative Coins and Pendants:

First off, I have a number of pending requests for coins and key fobs for which I had run out of stock. I am working with the vendor to see if I can reorder small numbers of the sold-out items, and I should have better information to pass on to you very soon.

There are still plenty of coins of design A, B and D available, but the only pendants left are for coin D. I am completely out of coins and pendants for version C. However, please hold off making any requests for coins or fobs until I get a definitive word from the vendor.

To refresh your memory on the current coin/fob options, here are the details:

Coin/Fob A = 1381st Geodetic Survey Squadron, 1964-68

Coin/Fob B = 1st Geodetic Survey Squadron, 1968-72

Coin/Fob C = Geodetic Survey Squadron, 1972-89

Coin/Fob D = Geodetic Survey Group, 1989-93

The fobs have a bezel surrounding the coin and a pre-drilled hole for hanging the coin from a necklace or keychain.

Thanks to **Dick Winslow**, our Webmaster, you may see what each design looks like at our GSS/GSG website: <http://www.geodeticsurvey.mysite.com/PhotoPages/2018Coins.html>.

I'm getting persistent questions about why isn't there a coin for the Squadron's original designation for when it was first established in July 1959. That design precedes the four designs listed above. As I have mentioned so many times in the previous newsletters, we offered a coin for the original Squadron designation---1381st Geodetic Survey Squadron (Missile), 1959-64---just before the 2015 reunion, and all 50 of them sold out before the reunion. I will consider reordering that coin next year in recognition of the 60th anniversary of the Squadron's founding, especially if there is going to be an off-year reunion in Orlando. But first, I need to sell off the remaining inventory of the four other designs described above.

News from the Field

Just today, before I pressed the 'Send' button for this newsletter, I received this note from **Bob Arriola** (Data Reduction; Orlando (Feb 1963 to Dec. 1965) and F.E. Warren AFB (Dec to May 1966).

):

"Howdy, this is Bob Arriola, I was in the 1381st from 62-66 I think. If you have any records please forward anything I send with regard to the 1381st my way. I'm 75 now and I forget easily. Good to here from you and if you email or converse with anyone else during my era with the 1381st please forward the commo to me so I can get in touch."

When Bob sent his contact info to me in 2013, he also had this to say:

"After training (Ft. Belvoir), I was in the 1381st Geodetic Survey Squadron from Jan. 1963 to May 1966, was stationed at Orlando AFB and finished my enlistment with the squadron at Cheyenne AFB. I left the service returned to El Paso, TX, and went to college at University of Texas at El Paso. Received an Electrical Engineering degree in 1971. Worked for White Sands Missile Range from '66 to '83, then worked for the Center for Countermeasures from '83 until my retirement in Jan. 2005.

I remember vividly **Stan Zawisza, Robert Weaver, Gil Lopez, Harry Inouye, and Bobby Semones**. The only ones I have communicated with are Stanley and of course Gil Lopez since he and I were from the same city, El Paso, and continued as friends after our time in the Service. I remember **Herbert Buteau** and worked for him while in Cheyenne. I also attended Rollins College in Winter Park, which helped me prepare for my Engineering degree (EE) that I earned later from UTEP. I remember having to do some quick Data Reduction overnight for the silos around Tucson. Many of us would travel to Daytona Beach on the weekends, so that was pretty wild."

If you were a friend of Bob's, please send him a greeting at arr54@aol.com .

Here's a question that came in from **Walt "Blackie" Blackmer** (Numerous military and civilian assignments, numerous GSS locations, 1961-84). We both hope some of you can help provide an answer:

"Garrett - Some years after I left the Philippine Islands (1952) I saw a photo of the monument erected at Cavite and a listing of personnel who had lost their lives while serving in the 29th named on the monument. I wonder whether anybody still has that material and, if so, would they share it with me. I surfed the net and found nothing and I don't know where to ask in Belvoir or DC. Seems like there were 29 names on it. Thought maybe you might be of help to me. Hope you had as great a Thanksgiving as I and my family did. - Walt (Blackie) Blackmer."

The 29th to which Walt is referring is the US Army's 29th Engineer Battalion (Topographic), which was very active doing geodetic surveys during and after WW2 all over the Pacific Theater. Some of the 29th's storied history is profiled in the following link, but there is no mention of the monument that Blackie asked about: <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/29enb.htm> .

Some of our GSS veterans started with Army Topographic units and others served in the Army Map Service and TOPOCOM prior to those agencies becoming part of the Defense Mapping Agency. The 29th ended up at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, in the 1980s, but it was inactivated in 2007. Some of our veterans have also spent a tour or two in the Philippines, so we hope someone out there can point us to the information Blackie is looking for.

ACTION ITEM: If you can point us to any information on the 29th monument at Cavite or a detailed history of the 29th Engineer Battalion (Topo), please reply as soon as possible to me (garrettmoo@verizon.net) and Walt (cw6666@att.net).

Another note came from "**Boe**" **Borchardt** concerning one of our original Orlando veterans of the 1381st, **Connie Musha** (Survey, Gravity and IPS, Orlando & FEW, 1959-62 and 1975-77):

"Hi G,

I called/talked to Connie last week. He said he still gets around and out of the house once a week to visit his Sister that is 92 years old. Connie is 88 years old and said he is on oxygen, but he said he was still able to have a martini each evening. His mind still seems to be sharp as a tack and still has a good memory. I spent some great TDYs with Connie. He was involved in some moments in his Air Force career. His Son Mark is retired from the Navy. He and his Thai Wife live with Connie. Mark works at Virginia Beach, I think at the Naval Air Station.

He asked about **Richard Massetti**. I sent Rich an email and told him to call Connie...

Connie told me he has a new computer but has not hooked it up and no longer does the emails. I had not heard from him in a long time. I got the feeling he just wanted to hear from some of the troops. People sometimes forget about the "Old Troops"...If you have the time you may call [Connie] at **(252) 398-3119**"

Thanks, Boe

If you were a friend or colleague of Connie's, please give him a call at the number above.

We also had a nice long message from **Richard Jones** (Survey & Sat Tri, FEW & Holloman, 1978-85), who noted that he became interested in astronomy because of his experience in the Squadron and actually became a friend of the late astronomer Clyde Tombaugh, who discovered Pluto in 1930 (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clyde_Tombaugh.)

"Hi Garrett,

After my retirement in August 1985, I became more interested in Astronomy. I had relocated to Las Cruces New Mexico where Dr. Clyde W. Tombaugh (Discoverer of Pluto) lived. I was able to become acquainted with him and his wife, initially through our church. I attended 8 lectures by Dr. Tombaugh and he helped me to choose my first telescope, an 8-inch Newtonian. I was at his house when David Levy showed up with pictures of a new comet he had discovered that week (Levy-Schumacher 9). The comet was unusual due to the fact that it had broken into many pieces. Later it was determined that it was going to crash into Jupiter. I spent several months studying Jupiter prior to the comets encounter with Jupiter and when the encounter happened, I was able to see the marks that it left on

Jupiter. A few years later I served a president of the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC), which was started by Dr. Tombaugh in 1955. The ASLC had about 75 members, but after Dr. Tombaugh passed away, many people quit and the club was down to about 25 members, and at 55, I was the youngest member. I told them that the society was literally going to die out if we didn't get some more and younger members. I offered to make a big effort to grow the society, if they would make me president. Through public events, a basic astronomy and sky gazing course eventually taught through the local community college, as well as some good crowd pleasing events, (Mars close approach an alignment of five planets), we were able to get some good newspaper stories and during my year as president with the help of some younger knowledgeable people our membership went from 25 to 110. My knowledge of astronomy gained through my 6 years in GSS inspired me to learn more. A brief exposure at Ft Belvoir was enhanced while working with the crew at White Sands. I miss that great group of guys and often wonder what has become of them."

- Richard Jones

I mentioned to Richard that Alan Stern, the chief scientist on the New Horizons Pluto project at NASA, was none too pleased with the demotion of Pluto to minor-planet status by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in 2006, even though the IAU offered to start calling all minor planets "Plutoids" in honor of Pluto to make up for it.

"It's just some people in a smoke-filled room who dreamed it up," Stern said. "Plutoids or hemorrhoids, whatever they call it, this is irrelevant." Got a good laugh out of Stern's quote!

We also got a brief message from **David Conner** (no contact information yet on David) with a link to a 1958 *Life* magazine article about the Army Map Service (AMS) efforts to map the world. AMS was the predecessor of DMA's Topographic Center (DMATC) in Bethesda, MD, and later, the combined Hydrographic-Topographic Center (DMAHTC). Maybe you will see some familiar names in the article or in the photo credits! Here's the link: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=vFMEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA135&dq=geodesy&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiB6vTT14DeAhUvq1kKHUWUB8UQ6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=geodesy&f=false>

And last, but not least, I was greatly cheered to hear, after a very long absence, from my old Astro mentor and colleague, **Jim Edwards** (Survey & Astro-positioning, Orlando, 1963-66; FEW, 1970-74; Det 4, 1974-78). He contacted me on Facebook and said:

"Garry, here is Jim Edwards, and I am doing well. Sorry we missed the reunion, but Andrea was not up to traveling. I always read with interest your posts on the GSS. Those were good days."

Keep in touch, Jim!

Gains and Losses

We had one gain to our website roster that I forgot to mention last time.

Please welcome **Robert "Bob" Burtch** (Survey, Det 1, VAFB, 1969-70). Says Bob:

"I would like to be added to the list of members for the Geodetic Survey Squadron. I served in 1970 (a little in 1969) at Vandenberg AFB, primarily doing latitude and longitude surveys with the Wild T-4. Also did some simple triangulation in California. Thanks."

- Bob

Regrettably, we also have a loss. It is with great sadness that I report the loss of Major **Robert “Bob” Millians** to cancer. Bob was a veritable institution in the Squadron from its early days in Orlando and Cheyenne and twice as Commander of Det 1, Vandenberg AFB, CA. Bob was also the Officer-in-Charge of the two year survey that provided geodetic coordinates for the numerous satellite photo calibration sites in the desert southwest and other locations around the country. With the exception of a four-year assignment as head of the Survey Department at the Defense Mapping School, Bob spent his entire career with the Squadron in various roles as a team leader, branch chief and detachment commander. Bob had been in hospice care with terminal cancer for the past several months. I recently checked in with his wife Beverly to inquire on his status. She broke the news that he had passed away just last week on Friday, November 23rd.

“Garry, I was going to send you a message today. Bob passed away very peacefully Friday morning, Nov. 23. Our sons had visited with him on Tues, Wed, Thursday. The staff in the Wounded Warrior Wing at the VA hospital in Augusta GA could not have been more attentive and caring in his final days. We will have a memorial service, Dec. 8 at 10:30am, Athens First Baptist Church, Athens, GA.”

Here is the link to Bob’s obituary and funeral arrangements: https://www.lordandstephens.com/notices/Robert-Millians?fbclid=IwAR1TTzb9QRs3zpCY55t7zpEbzS99C7JR0q6bDf_Ph23le8w0cGw7AAD7K5Q

Our sympathy goes to Bev and family. His suffering is over. May he rest in peace...

Final Notes:

That’s all for now.

December is here and with it comes the headlong rush to the holidays and a new year. I hope your 2018 was wonderful and your new year will be full of promise!

I will send out another newsletter soon with directions on how to order our anticipated resupply of coins and keyfobs for your favorite version.

If you are on Facebook, I invite you to “friend” me there. Find me at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=10000934200983>

There is also a Facebook page for the Squadron/Group at <https://www.facebook.com/1381GeodeticSurveySquadron/>

Garrett

Field Survey Branch & Astronomic Positioning Branch

GSS/Cheyenne

April 1967 - May 1970 and January - December 1972

Nothing makes the Earth seem so spacious as to have friends at a distance—they make the latitudes and longitudes.
— Henry David Thoreau, Surveyor and Philosopher