



173d Airborne Brigade Association



2017 Oklahoma Reunion After Action Report

May 17th to May 21st, 2017

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Hosted by Chapter 18



After Action Report

2017 Oklahoma Reunion

Held Wednesday 17, 2017 to Sunday May 21, 2017 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Introduction and Background

Each year the 173d Airborne Brigade Association conducts an annual reunion in a host city with every 5th year in Columbus, Georgia. At the annual reunion, the future reunion locations are bid two years out by a Chapter(s) at the General Membership Meeting. The Chapter(s) conduct a presentation of what they have to offer and the dates of the proposed convention. The Host Chapter(s) for the following year's reunion provides a presentation of planned activities as they have it at that time, keeping in mind changes may occur due to unknown circumstances that may arise over the ensuing year.

Date & Location of the 2017 Reunion

The 2017 was conducted from Wednesday May 17, 2017 to Sunday May 21, 2017 in Oklahoma

City, Oklahoma. The Sheraton Hotel in downtown Oklahoma City was the reunion anchor hotel.

Description of Location

Downtown Oklahoma City had the main attraction of the "Bricktown" district with its restaurants, bars, river walk, and Ball Park. Also, there were free buses running every 20 minutes that could be taken to other sites of interest such as local restaurants, the Murrah Building National Memorial, the Botanical Gardens, and the Museum of Art. Most were in walking distance from the reunion hotel. It was for this for these reasons the downtown hotels were asked to bid on hosting the reunion.

Challenges

There were multiple challenges facing Chapter 18 who had been selected to host the 2017 Reunion in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

- **Reunion Competition**
 - Vicenza, Italy had been the original 2017 Reunion location to be hosted by Chapter 173 in July 2017.
 - However, because so many Members objected because of the potential travel expenses, travel distances and other challenges in a foreign country, the Executive Committee decided to offer a domestic site as an alternative.

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- Because the Oklahoma Chapter 18 had made a previous bid, Chapter 18 was awarded the domestic site for the 2017 Reunion on Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to be held in May 2017.
- Consequently, Chapter 18 was competing with Chapter 173 for Reunion Attendees since most Members could not afford to attend both reunions within a three month period.
- **Registration Fee**
 - The Registration Fee for previous Reunions had been \$173. The Executive Committee decided that more Members could afford to attend if the Reunion Registration Fee was reduced to \$99.
 - This meant that the Host Chapter would be unable to offer free ball caps, t-shirts, coffee cups, etc. in Attendees goodie bags.
 - This meant that the \$99 registration fee would have to cover the annual banquet dinner charges (including service fees and taxes), Hospitality Room Expenses (including tap beer) and multiple other expenses.
 - This proved to be possible, but extremely challenging and required intensive cash management.
- **Website Registration**
 - The 2017 Reunions was the first annual reunion to provide online Reunion Registration and Payments on the Sky Soldier website with the capability to pay registration fees online by credit card.
 - In the past, Host Chapters had either used their existing Chapter websites or hired a “techie” to create another website for their annual reunion.
 - In either case, the Hosting Chapters incurred significant fees in building and maintaining that capability. Most of those previous hosting Chapters did not offer online registration fee payments by credit card.
 - This even more challenging to have to cover both the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion as well as the 2017 Italy Gathering on the website.
- **Location**
 - Because Oklahoma City is in the center of the country, it did not have the same tourist appeal as locations that are more exotic.
 - In addition, the distance to higher populated areas made it more challenging to attract Attendees.
- **Attendees**
 - An assumption of 800 Attendees at the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion was based on attendance at the three previous reunions.

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- It turned out that estimate was too high because only about 623 actually attended.
- **Chapter 18 Resources**
 - I am not sure why Chapter 18 was selected as a Reunion Hosting Chapter because of the limited amount of active Membership.
 - Rarely did more than 10 Members attend any quarterly Chapter Meetings.
 - This limited manpower was a huge challenge to plan and conduct an annual reunion with the anticipated number of Attendees.
- **Accounting**
 - This was probably the most difficult and time-consuming challenge.
 - Membership Fees (both new and renewals), Association Contributions, 2017 Oklahoma Reunion Registration Payments and 2017 Italy Registration Payments could all be paid on the Sky Soldier website using credit cards.
 - Those credit card payments were processed thru the Association's PayPal account and swept nightly into the Associations Bank of America checking account in one lump deposit.
 - The challenge was to reconcile and identify the type of revenue when downloading the BOA deposits into the Association's QuickBooks Online accounting software.
 - That process would involve hours of reconciling those types of revenue in order to account for Cost Centers (i.e., Membership Revenue, Contribution Revenue, 2017 Oklahoma Reunion Revenue and 2017 Italy Gathering Revenue).
 - I have taken steps to eliminate that time consuming process for the 2017 Reunion by creating a separate Checking Account, separate PayPal Account separate Shopping Cart for Events/Reunions.
 - This streamlining account process is fully automated and will save a minimum of 10 hours weekly.

REUNION PLANNING & OPERATIONS

Overall Organization, Timing & Planning

- The Chapter Hosting the reunion should begin planning two years in advance of the reunion.
- A Reunion Coordinator needs to be selected.
- The Reunion Coordinator should begin formulating a written Reunion Operational Plan and selecting the Reunion Team.

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- After the 2016 Reunion had been completed and Oklahoma City had been selected for the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion, I approached the Oklahoma Reunion Coordinator Tim Austin and volunteered to serve as his Assistant Reunion Coordinator because of my planning and organizational skills.
- After explaining my concept of what I felt needed to be done, Tim gave me full operational control and his total support.
- Because of the Chapter 18's limited manpower resources, I felt it was imperative to take the following steps to conduct a successful reunion.
 - A Reunion Organization Chart needed to be created with specific team functions.
 - Team Leaders needed to be appointed. (See Appendices)
 - A detailed Planning Guide (See Appendices) needed to be created containing the Mission, Organizational Chart, Budget, and detailed Area of Responsibilities for each Team with tasks listed to chronological order with target dates and completion date columns for each task.
 - The Reunion Coordinator needed to locate a site for monthly Reunion Team Meetings and send out Team meeting invitations at least a week in advance requiring written RSVPs.
 - The Reunion Team needed to meet monthly and each Team Leader should render oral reports as to tasks accomplished since last meeting, tasks to be accomplished before the next team meeting and any problem, recommendations, etc. to be addressed.
 - The Organizational Chart is shown in Attachment A and contained the following 10 teams with the Team Leaders shown. (See Appendices)
 - Registration/Financial Team- Jerry Cooper assisted by Gene Bland
 - Hotel Team- Kimberly Hubbard assisted by Jerry Cooper
 - Hospitality Room Team- George Tabor assisted by Derrek Gibson, Richard Perez & Larry Bennett
 - Banquet Team- Jerry Cooper assisted by Larry Bennett
 - Vendors Room Team- Don Walton assisted by Richard Perez & Ed Perkins
 - Meeting Rooms Team- Jerry Cooper assisted by Larry Bennett
 - Transportation Team- Jon Love assisted by Derrek Gibson & Robert Gustafson
 - Special Activities Team- Tim Austin assisted by Maurice McGleish
 - Public Relations Team- Tim Austin assisted by Bob Allen
 - Fund Raising Team- Bob Allen assisted by Jerry Cooper

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- I created an email Contact Group for the Reunion Team for periodic announcements, reports, meeting notices, etc.
- Because of the limited manpower, I estimated that we need a minimum of 10 dedicated and highly motivated Chapter 18 Members who were united to conduct a terrific Annual Reunion. We were fortunate because we had several of the wives that volunteered and contributed significantly.
- For the most part, the Team Leaders were volunteers and a few were appointed.
- Because of the limited manpower, some Chapter 18 Members were involved in more than 1 Team.
 - In my case, I either led or participated in 4 Teams, whereas Tim Austin led or participated in 2 Teams.
 - A few Team Members were floaters, i.e., shifting Teams as the situation required.

Team Incentives

- To provide motivational and participation incentives to Team Members, the Team Members were promised that their individual Reunion Registration Fee would be refunded after the completion of the reunion if they had performed accordingly.
- Consequently, I followed through on my promise and refunded 10 Registration Fees.
- I also promised that Team Members who participated in the Reunion Operations would be provided a hotel room at no charge for their participation using the comped hotel nights earned by the Reunion.
- Consequently, I followed through on my promise and used the comped hotel rooms or paid for any rooms for the Team Members who did not live in Oklahoma City or were required to work early and late. That applied to seven Team Members.
- Finally, I authorized that each Team Member would receive a 2017 Oklahoma Reunion Challenge Coin at no cost and were also granted free admission to the BBQ picnic.

1- REGISTRATION/FINANCIAL/REPORTS

Because the majority of the scheduled tasks fell under the scope of Registration/Financial or Reporting and the fact that they were the most labor intensive, I assumed the responsibility for overseeing those areas. In addition, since I was the Webmaster for the Association, most of the tasks were related to the website software program Wild Apricot (WA).

Registration

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There were three ways to register for the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion

- On the Shy Soldier website
- Printing, completing and mailing a Registration Form with payment from the Sky Soldier website.
- Completing and mailing a Registration Form with payment from the Sky Soldier magazine.

Website Registration

- Being this was the first annual reunion providing Reunion Registration and credit card payment capability, overall it went very well. There were several bugs encountered in the beginning. One example is where the Attendees would select the \$99 Member Registration option and then select the separate Banquet option as well as the separate Hospitality Room option. Even after imputing multiple warnings that the Banquet and the daily access to the Hospitality Room was included in the \$99 Member Registration Fee, some members still duplicated payment and requiring manual labor in issuing overpayment refunds.
- The Original Registration Form that was published on-line did not ask for Unit Served with or Service Dates. These fields were need to print Name Tags for Attendees as well as the List of Attendees in the Reunion Booklet. It took at least three days to manually add the missing data. This will be corrected in the 2018 online Registration Form as well as a line for the Member's Chapter Affiliation will be added.
- There were multiple cases that non-members registered as Members and got the \$99 Members Rate. Changes will be made to prevent that in future online registration. Either they must join or pay a \$125 Registration Fee.
- With the 2017 Italy Gathering scheduled for two months later, it deduced the normal number of attendees at an annual reunion. Two reunions in the same year should be avoided in order to maximize reunion attendees.

Last Minute Operations

I completed the following tasks in the last few weeks prior to the Reunion:

1. Name Tags Designed Printed
2. Badge Holders Ordered and Obtained
3. Admission Tickets Designed and Printed
4. Goodie Bags Requested and Obtained
5. Reunion Booklets Designing and Printing
6. Banquet Brochures Designing and Printing

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7. Maps & Brochures Requested and Obtained
 8. Registration Lists
 9. Registration Notebooks
 10. Registration Desk Volunteers Requested and Obtained
 11. U-Haul Enclosed Trailer Rental
 12. Signage Designed and Obtained
 13. Banquet Menu Selection Submitted
- **Name Tags**
 - Printed Attendee Name Tags had to be designed, printed and inserted in the Badge Holders that had been ordered 6 months previously. (See Attachment 3 for an example.)
 - The Name Tags were prepared via Microsoft Word Mail Merge using a predesigned Name Tag template (Avery #5163 Shipping Labels 5 per page) and from a list of alphabetized Attendees Names exported from the Wild Apricot Registration database into an Excel spreadsheet.
 - The Name Tags were printed on light blue 110 pound 8.5" x 11" heavy duty stock paper 6 to a page and had to be cut into individual name tags.
 - The printing of the Name Tags was delayed as long as possible to allow for late Registrations.
 - The Name Tag template was contained on a thumb drive that I gave to the Chapter 1 President Hosting the 2018 Reunion.)
 - **Badge Holders**
 - 1,000 Navy blue Badge Holder had been ordered imbedded with a colored 173d Airborne Brigade Association logo, a cord lanyard, zippered pockets in the front and back and a clear pocket for printed Name Tags. (See Attachment 3 for a photo.
 - After the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion, about 350 unused Badge Holders were shipped to Chapter 1 to use for the 2018 Reunion.
 - The printed Name Tags and respective Special Activity Tickets were inserted in each Attendee's Badge Holder.
 - **Admission Tickets**
 - Admission Tickets were designed and printed for the following Special Activities using a template. (See Attachment 5 for an example.)
 - Challenge Coins- White
 - BBQ Picnic- Green

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- Bus Tour to Fort Sill- Red
- Bus Tour to National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum- Orange
- Ladies Luncheon- Pink
- Bus Tour to 45th Infantry Division Museum- Blue
- Gold Star Luncheon- Gold
- Each Admission Ticket was printed on bright colored 65 pound 8.5" x 11" heavy-duty stock paper.
 - A packet of "Astrobrights" package contained 250 sheets containing 50 sheets of the following colors:
 - Solar Yellow- 50 sheets
 - Pulsar Pink- 50 sheets
 - Re-Entry Red- 50 sheets
 - Orbit Orange- 50 sheets
 - Gamma Green- 50 sheets
- Admission Tickets were printed eight per page using a downloaded template.
 - Each Activity ticket contained the name of the Special Activity (i.e., "BBQ Picnic" or "Ladies Luncheon" or "Bus Tour to Fort Sill").
 - Each Activity Ticket also contained the Day, Date and Time of the Special Activity.
 - There were eight Activity Tickets per sheet, so they had to be cut into individual tickets.
- The Special Activities Ticket template was contained on a thumb drive that I gave to the Chapter 1 President Hosting the 2018 Reunion.)
 - All Chapter 1 would have to do is to update the templates containing names of the Special Activities as well as the Days, Dates and Times to fit the 2018 Reunion data.)
- The printing of the Special Activity Tickets was delayed as late as possible to allow for late Registrants.
- **Goodie Bags**
 - Over 700 Goodie Bags were requested and received from the Regional USAA Rep covering the State of Oklahoma.
 - The bags were Navy blue with carrying straps and with the USAA logo embossed on the sides of the bag.

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- The bags were made of heavy-duty nylon material and were used to insert various materials (described below) to be given to the Attendees when they registered at the Registration Desk.
- After the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion, approximately 150 unused Goodie Bags were shipped to Chapter 1 to be used in the 2018 Reunion.
- **Reunion Booklet**
 - I designed a 52-page Reunion Booklet using a Microsoft Publisher booklet template. (See Attachment 5 for the Table of Contents.)
 - The booklet was in color, contained 52 pages of related information and was to be inserted into each Goodie Bag that was given to each Attendee when they signed in at the Registration Desk.
 - I solicited bids from local print shops and selected the print shop for a local university bookstore.
 - The bookstore printed, folded and stapled 650 in color 52-page Reunion Booklets; printed 650 in color 4-page Banquet Brochures; cut all of the Name Tag sheets containing 6 Name Tags per page into individual Name Tags; and cut all of the Special Activity Ticket sheets containing 8 tickets per page and grouped them by color and activity.
 - They charged a total of \$950 for all of these tasks and delivered them to me 6 days before the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion started.
- **Maps and Booklets**
 - The following maps and booklets were requested and received from the Oklahoma Convention Bureau to be stuffed into the USAA goodie bags:
 - Map of downtown Oklahoma City
 - Map of free downtown bus routes
 - Map of Bricktown
 - Map of underground tunnel system
 - Local Attractions booklets
- **Registration Lists**
 - Three Registration lists exported from Wild Apricot Registration Reports were printed 1 week before the reunion began for the following people:
 - Assistant Reunion Coordinator
 - Registration Team Leader
 - 3 Volunteer Lady Registrars
- **Registration Invoices**
- **Registration Notebooks**

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- Four Registration 3-ring notebooks were created containing A-Z tabs for the following people:
 - Assistant Reunion Coordinator (containing the complete list of Registrants)
 - Registration Team Leader (containing the complete list of Registrants)
 - Each of the 3 Volunteer Lady Registrars:
 - Volunteer Registrar #1 had the List of the Registrants with last names beginning with A-G with Registration Forms behind the respective tabs.
 - Volunteer Registrar #2 had the List of the Registrants with last names beginning with H to P with Registration Forms behind the respective tabs.
 - Volunteer Registrar #3 had the List of the Registrants with last names beginning with Q to Z with Registration Forms behind the respective tabs.
 - After the reunion was completed, these 3-ring notebooks were shipped to Chapter 1.
- **Registration Desk Area**
 - The Hotel was requested to set up a Registration Desk area near the Hospitality Room, Vendors Room, Storage Room and Operations Center.
 - The Registration Desk area layout consisted of three 6' x 3' folding tables provided by the Hotel in a straight line.
 - Right behind that area was the storage Room containing unused USAA goodie bags, unused badge holders, unused Reunion Booklets, Unused Banquet Brochures, unused maps, local attraction brochures, etc.
 - The Operations was in close proximity with the Reunion Coordinator or Assistant Reunion Coordinator to assist or answer any questions.
 - Behind those three tables was a 6' x 3' folding table set up for the Registration Team Leader.
 - His role was to
 - assist any of the volunteer ladies registering Attendees
 - answer any questions
 - resolve any registration or payment issues
 - register any Attendees who had not previously registered
 - accept payments for unregistered Attendees or special activities not originally selected or paid

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- Swiped credit cards for payments using the PayPal device that had been set up in advance with activities and related prices.
- He also had a computer that could access the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion webpages on the Sky Soldier website to answer questions or help resolve issues.
- Each Registration Desk was manned by one of the three Lady Volunteer Registrar who had the following items:
 - Volunteer Registrar #1
 - A 3-ring notebook with the List of the Registrants with last names beginning with A-G with Registration Forms behind the respective tabs.
 - A plastic bin containing the assembled Badge Holders, Name Tags and Registrant's Admission Tickets packets for Registrants last names beginning with A-G.
 - A USAA goodie bag containing four maps mentioned above, a 52 page Reunion Booklet and Oklahoma City Attractions booklet.
 - Volunteer Registrar #2
 - A 3-ring notebook with the List of the Registrants with last names beginning with H-P with Registration Forms behind the respective tabs.
 - A plastic bin containing the assembled Badge Holders, Name Tags and Registrant's Admission Tickets packets for Registrants last names beginning with H-P.
 - A USAA goodie bag containing four maps mentioned above, a 52 page Reunion Booklet and Oklahoma City Attractions booklet.
 - Volunteer Registrar #3
 - A 3-ring notebook with the List of the Registrants with last names beginning with Q-Z with Registration Forms behind the respective tabs.
 - A plastic bin containing the assembled Badge Holders, Name Tags and Registrant's Admission Tickets packets for Registrants last names beginning with Q-Z.
- A "Job Description" for the Lady Volunteer Registrars had been developed and inserted inside the front cover of all of the 3-ring notebooks for each of the Lady Volunteer Registrants, the Registration

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Team Leader's 3-ring notebook and the Assistant Reunion Coordinator's 3-ring notebook.

- In addition, the three Lady Volunteer Registrars were briefed by the Registration Team Leader and Assistant Reunion Coordinator on Tuesday afternoon before the Reunion began in the Registration Desk Areas.
- The three Volunteers were given free parking tickets for the Sheraton Hotel's covered parking area, a free Reunion Challenge Coin, a copy of the Reunion Booklet with stick notes on important pages (Table of Contents, Schedule of Activities, etc.) as well as two free admissions tickets for each Lady Volunteer Registrar to the Saturday night Banquet

- **U-Haul Enclosed Trailer Rental**

- Because of the volume of material that I needed to haul to the Sheridan Hotel Reunion site in Oklahoma City (122 miles from my home in Muskogee Oklahoma, a U-Haul enclosed trailer was rented and picked up on the Saturday morning before the reunion started.
- The following items we loaded in my pickup truck and enclosed trailer on that Saturday afternoon:
 - 6 Boxes of 700 USAA goodie bags
 - 7 boxes of Reunion T-shirts, ball caps, etc., to be sold in Chapter 18's table in the Vendors Room
 - 2 boxes of Badge Holders
 - 650 Reunion Booklets
 - 650 Banquet Brochures
 - 2 Boxes of cut Admission Tickets
 - Multiple plastic bins to be used for the assemble Badge Holder, Name Tags, Admission Ticket packets
 - Box of cut 623 Name Tag inside plastic trays
 - Copy, office supplies
 - Office equipment (stapler, 3 and 2 holed punches, paper cutter, etc.)
 - 8 yellow lined flip charts for unit sign-in messages for easels
 - 2 color printers
 - 3 computers
 - Box of extension cords, power strips, etc.
 - Suitcases with personal clothing
 - Garment bag with ACU for Saturday night Banquet
 - 3-ring notebooks containing Registrant Lists and individual invoices

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- Multiple other 3-ring notebooks containing related reunion information
 - See Attachment XXX for copy 3-page Packing List.
 - After the completion of the reunion all unused office supplies, flip charts, 3-ring notebooks, plastic bins/tubs, etc., were shipped to Chapter 1.
- **Signage**
 - Multiple Signs were printed on heavy duty stock paper in large bold black ink for Hospitality Room, Vendors Room, Meeting Rooms, Banquet, Registration area, etc., to be mounted on the door, easels, Tour Buses, etc., of the respective signs.
 - After the completion of the reunion, all signage was shipped to Chapter 1.
 - A 6' x 4' Banquet Seating Chart was printed on corrugated cardboard and mounted on an easel adjacent to the Registration Desk area until Saturday afternoon when it was moved to the Banquet room entrance.
 - The other side had a large Welcome Sign, which was mounted on an easel and displayed adjacent to the Registration Desk Area.
 - The cost of this sign as well as the printing of the 650 Reunion booklets and 650 Banquet Brochures, cutting costs for the Name Tags and Admission tickets were covered by the ad revenue for the Reunion Booklets.
- **Banquet Menu Selection**
 - A special meeting was held with the Renaissance Hotel Staff to make the final Menu Selection for the Saturday night banquet.

"Stuffing Session"

- A "Stuffing Session" was scheduled for the Reunion Team to meet on Sunday afternoon three days before the start of the reunion and to assemble the Attendee Badge Holders with Name Tags and respective Activity Tickets and stuff the USAA goodie bags with various materials.
- Unfortunately, that Sunday happened to be Mother's Day. Yet we had all 12 Team Members with three wives participate and complete the mission in about 4 hours.
- To help expedite the process, a "Stuffing Session" diagram had been developed to display the functions, responsibilities, items involved, etc. and a copy was given to each participant as well as given at a general briefing before the session began.
- See Attachment XXX for a copy of the diagram.

FINANCIAL

- A Financial Report for the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion was created in QuickBooks Online and was mailed automatically to the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion Coordinator.

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- Similarly, a Financial Report for the 2018 Reunion was created in QuickBooks Online and will be mailed automatically to the 2018 Reunion Coordinator.

REPORTS

- The 2017 Oklahoma Reunion Officers were set up in the Sky Soldier website as Administrators and could view the various reports on the Events 2017 Oklahoma Reunion webpage.
- Similarly, the key 2018 Reunion Officers have been set up in the Sky Soldier website as Administrators and can view the various reports on the Events 2018 Reunion webpage.
- Several Excel reports were also created to determine the status of various categories:
 - Number of Reunion Registrants
 - Number of Hotel Room Nights reserved by Hotel.
 - Number of Registrants registered for various Special Activities
 - Potential Hotel Penalties
 - See Appendices to view.

2- HOTELS

1. The Hotel area caused the biggest problem mainly because the 173d Hotel Concierge (who had been appointed by the then President Roy Scott) had negotiated and signed a contract in September 2015 with the Renaissance Hotel in Downtown Oklahoma City.
- When I agreed in June 2016 to serve as the Assistant Reunion Coordinator to Tim Austin, I asked for a copy of the Renaissance Hotel contract.
 - The copy that I received was dated 9/18/2015 but was unsigned and contained the following incorrect information:
 - Program Dates were shown to be 7/4/2017 to 7/9/2017.
 - Guest Room Block (Note that the **Dates did not match the Days**)
 - 50 rooms were booked for Tuesday night May 17, 2017
 - 225 rooms were booked for Wednesday night May 18, 2017
 - 225 rooms were booked for Thursday night May 19, 2017
 - 225 rooms were booked for Friday night May 20, 2017
 - 225 rooms were booked for Saturday night May 21, 2017
 - 50 rooms for booked for Sunday night May 22, 2017
 - Banquet was shown on Friday night May 20, 2017

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- When I noticed these errors, I notified our Hotel Concierge that the contract needed to be corrected and I was told that was in the process of being done.
- I kept asking for a copy of the corrected copy, but I did not receive it until Tim Austin and I met with the Renaissance Hotel Rep in early February 2017.
- What really exposed the fiasco was after I had posted the Renaissance Hotel Reservation information on our Sky Soldier website in early 2016, I started getting emails and calls that all of the Hotel Rooms had been booked and they were told to seek reservations elsewhere.
- This struck me as unbelievable and I contacted our Hotel Concierge for an explanation.
- That is when she disclosed that when they had attempted to revise the dates and make sure we had 225 rooms blocked for the first night of the reunion on Wednesday May 17, 2017, we were only allotted 50 rooms.
- They had corrected the dates but not the Days; consequently we only had 50 rooms blocked for Wednesday May 17 instead of 225 reflected in the originally contract.
- That meant that when the majority of Reunion Attendees arrive on the first day of the reunion, only 50 rooms were available for that first night.
- So our Hotel Concierge immediately booked a contract for the Sheraton Hotel across the street for 225 rooms for Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.
- This might have worked had 800 Attendees come as projected.
- To make a long story short, the errors in the original contract caused a huge amount of problems and should have not occurred.
- What is worst a non-member of the Association was allowed to negotiate a hotel contract without any Member of the Executive Committee reviewing and approving the contract was signed.

THIS SHOULD NEVER BE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN AGAIN!!!

- **Other Hotel Contract Deficiencies**
 - There were too many instances where our Hotel Concierge instead of just signing a cookie-cutter template should have requested concessions.
 - For example, we were not allowed to bring soft drinks and snacks into the Hospitality Room per the Sheraton Hotel Contract. That had to be re-negotiated and allowed.
 - In addition, we were not allowed to bring any of our own alcoholic beverages into the Hospitality room. Instead, we were required to purchase them from the hotel at excessive prices.

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- They finally did agree for us to bring in one donated 16 gallon of tap beer keg daily.
- It is true that we received some concessions, but not nearly what we should have requested and received.
- If you do not ask for the concessions up front and in writing, the odds are you will not receive them.
- A checklist of concessions needs to be developed and used when negotiating future hotel contracts.
- A written Reunion SOP needs to be developed, approved and followed for all future reunions.
- Most of the contents of this After Action Report and attachments could be used in the Reunion SOP.
- **Other Hotel Related Comments**
 - Because of the problems with the room availability at the Renaissance Hotel, a new contract for 225 rooms per the 4 reunion nights with the Sheraton Hotel was signed by our Hotel Concierge.
 - The Hospitality Room, Registration Desk Area, Vendors Room, Operations Center Storage Room, etc. were all moved to the 2nd floor of the Sheraton Hotel, while keeping the Banquet under the jurisdiction of the Renaissance Hotel.
 - A minimum of three physical meetings were held with each of the Renaissance and Sheraton Hotel Convention Service Reps on their premises prior to the reunion.
 - Physical walk-thrus were conducted for:
 - **Renaissance Hotel**
 - Banquet Room
 - **Sheraton Hotel**
 - Operations Center
 - Hospitality Room
 - Vendors Room
 - Registration Desk Area
 - Storage Room
 - Room for the Board of Directors Meeting
 - Room for the General Membership Meeting
 - Room for the BBQ Picnic
 - Room for the Ladies Luncheon
 - Room for the Gold Star Luncheon

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- Room for the Sunday Morning Memorial Service
- Requests for Audio Visual Equipment were submitted to both hotels one week ahead of the reunion by room and day.

3- HOSPITALITY ROOM

- **Observations**
 - There were three Chapter 18 Members assigned to work the Hospitality Room. Of the three, one was designated to be a floater to also help in other areas of the reunion site. There was enough work and attendee flow through the room for there to be at least four full time workers. Four workers would insure that each worker could have bathroom breaks, eat, and leave the area for short periods. During peak room use, one worker was constantly making popcorn, which was a huge attraction! Very well received!
 - Lack of more than one keg of free beer per day was just a small problem, but most attendees understood that this was a hotel rule that we could not overcome. I do believe that after the free beer was gone each day, guests continued to buy hotel supplied drinks.
 - We had a few items left over from the Hospitality Room, mainly paper products. The only food & drink left was one bag of Fritos, ½ container of peanuts, approximately 10-12 cans of Diet Pepsi and a nearly one full box of popcorn.
 - All of the food (except beer) and paper products were obtained from Sam's Club. The Hospitality Room Coordinator used his Sam's Veteran Tax Exempt Card so the Chapter did not have to pay sales tax.
 - Only received one complaint during the whole week concerning the Hospitality Room. It was made on Friday afternoon by a woman who had arrived earlier in the day. She wanted dip for the chips, I was making popcorn and did not address her complaint.
 - The only other complaint received during the week was that the raffle tickets should be moved from the Vender Room to a spot where more attendees could see them. As a result, they were moved to a table at the entrance to the Hospitality Room and we did not hear any more complaints.
 - The bartenders and hotel staff that worked the Hospitality Room were great! Each and every one of them went out of their way to

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see that the we and the attendees had what we needed. A special thanks and recognition are extended to Magda and Racheal for their help and consideration.

- Edible/Drinkable/Disposable Inventory by Purchase Date**

Item	Quantity	Description
Potato Chips	6	1 lb. bags
Frito Chips	6	1 lb. bags
Dorito Chips	6	1 lb. bags
Peanuts	3	52 oz. containers
Pretzel Sticks	3	88 oz. containers
Tap Beer	4	16 gallon kegs (donated)
Water	4	45 bottle cases
Coke	4	12 oz. can cases
Diet Coke	4	12 oz. can cases
Pepsi	4	12 oz. can cases
Diet Pepsi	4	12 oz. can cases
7 Up	5	12 oz. can cases
Beer Cups	3	330 count containers
Napkins	2	500 count boxes
Aluminum Serving Pans	1	18 count container
Purchased May 16, 2017	Cost	\$333.??

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Item	Quantity	Description
Popcorn Machine rentals	2	
Popcorn	3	36 packet boxes
Purchased May 16, 2017	Cost	\$300.??

Item	Quantity	Description
Potato Chips	4	1 lb. bags
Frito Chips	4	1 lb. bags
Dorito Chips	4	1 lb. bags
Peanuts	6	52 oz. containers
Pretzel Sticks	2	88 oz. containers
Water	6	45 bottle cases
Beer Cups	3	330 count containers
Napkins	2	500 count boxes
Paper Boats	1	500 count box
Aluminum Serving Pans	1	18 count container
Purchased May 18, 2017	Cost	\$133.??

Item	Quantity	Description
Potato Chips	2	1 lb. bags
Frito Chips	2	1 lb. bags
Dorito Chips	2	1 lb. bags

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Peanuts	3	52 oz. containers
Beer	1	16 gallon keg (donated)
Water	3	45 bottle cases
Purchased May 19, 2017	Cost	\$65.26

- **TOTAL COST FOR SNACKS, DRINKS, & DISPOSABLES: \$831.??**
- **Other Hospitality Room Charges**
 - Although we held the cost of our beverages and snacks to a very low level, the following charges by the Sheraton Hotel exceeded our budget for the Hospitality Room:
 - Coffee
 - Ice
 - Bartenders
 - Microphone/Audio System Rental
 - The daily charge averaged about \$800.00 per day over a 5-day period totaling over \$4,000.00.

4- BANQUET

- **Menu**
 - It was decided to select a banquet meal of chicken as the meat, salad, two vegetables, a desert, and coffee and ice tea beverages.
 - Chapter 1 (who is hosting the 2018 Reunion) is considering adding the Banquet Menu selections to the 2018 Registration Form.
 - It should be noted that the Renaissance Hotel allowed us to purchase and bring in kegs of wine for pre-dinner toasts, which saved us a considerable amount of money.
- **Seating**
 - A new seating chart was introduced at the 2017 Reunion showing seating the Attendees a by units. (See Attachment XXX to view.)
 - The chart showed units by color and location: 1st Bn on the first two columns of tables on the far left, then the 2nd Bn with the next two columns of tables, then

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the 3rd Bn with two columns, then the 4th Bn with the next two columns of rows and finally the other units on the far right.

- Estimates were made on the Registrants' units indicated on their Registration Forms.
- The Renaissance Hotel Stagg placed the respective colored flags on the center of each table to assist the Attendees in sitting in the proper areas.
- The Unit leaders were requested to assist in abiding by the new seating arrangement.
- It is recommended that this seating chart arrangement continue with all unit shifting to the cleft. This would help reduce the annual complaints on certain units always rushing in and grabbing the most favorable seats.

- **Special Guests**

- A 4-man honor guard was provided by the Texas Airborne National Guard.
- A 6-man fife and drum bank was hired to pipe the Colors in and out.
- The three Lady Volunteer Registrants and guests were invited to attend at no charge.
- The former Commander of the 2nd Bn, 503d Regiment in Afghanistan was invited to be the Key Note Speaker.
- All of these special guests were given a Reunion Challenge Coin at no charge, a banquet meal at no charge and free hotel lodging for two nights. (The Fife and Drum Band was not provided free hotel lodging.)

- **Power Point Presentation**

- I prepared a Power Point presentation containing:
 - over 48 slides of the past 12 years of our Sky Soldier magazines covers
 - slides of special attractions in Oklahoma City area
 - music from John Phillip Sousa's marching songs
- The Power Point presentation was displayed on two large video screens and via the public address system.

- **Gatekeepers**

- Two Reunion Team Members served as gatekeepers making sure all Banquet Attendees displayed their Badge Holder with their Name Tags.
- This had been a problem in previous reunion when unpaid persons would enter and eat the Banquet Meal.

- **Head Table**

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- I designed the layout and seating chart for the head table.
- I think this should be an activity that the Association should handle at future reunions.
- In fact, the Reunion SOP (that is being currently constructed) should list areas of responsibility between the Host Chapter and the Association.
- **Banquet Emcee**
 - I volunteered to be the Banquet Emcee. Again, this probably should be a Member of the Executive Committee.

5- VENDORS ROOM

- There were a total of 8 Vendors
- The Vendor room tables were rented at:
 - \$500 for Non-Members or Chapters
 - \$300 for Members or Chapters
 - No charge for non-profit organizations
- Conclusion- small turnout, but most Vendors in the past reunions were from the East Coast of Southeaster United States

6- MEETING ROOMS

- Meeting Rooms were provided for the following event and were suitable:
 - Reunion Operations Center daily from Sunday noon May 13 thru Monday noon May20, 2017
 - Hospitality Room from Wednesday noon May 17 thru Sunday noon May 20, 2017
 - Board of Directors Meeting on Friday afternoon May 19, 2017
 - General Membership Meeting on Saturday morning May 20, 2017
 - Memorial Service on Sunday morning May 21, 2017
- Because we failed to meet the required Food & Beverage Quota of \$15,000.00 per the Sheraton Hotel contract, a \$2,666.03 penalty was incurred.

7- TRANSPORTATION

- Transportation is always a challenge to have sufficient transportation available during the reunion not knowing how many attendees there will be right up until the last week.
 - **Airport Transportation**

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- The hotels did not have shuttle service available to and from the airport to the hotels so Attendees had to fend for themselves because Chapter 18 did not have the manpower available to help in this area.
- **Downtown Transportation**
 - There was free bus service in about a 12-block radius from the hotels that ran about every 30 minutes to the major sightseeing sites in the downtown Oklahoma City area.
 - For those who wished to venture to sites beyond the downtown area, city buses and taxis were available at reasonable fares.
 - Because both main hotels were across the street from each other, we did not have to secure bus transportation from hotels to the Hospitality Room, Vendors Room, Meeting Rooms and Banquet sites.
- **Bus Tours**
 - Because Attendees procrastinated in registering for the reunion, it was difficult in knowing how many busses to reserve for the three scheduled bus tours:
 - Fort Sill Bus Tour on Thursday May 18, 2017
 - Cowboy Hall of Fame Museum Bus Tour on Thursday May 19, 2017
 - 45th Infantry Division Museum Bus Tour on Thursday May 19, 2017
 - We were fortunate in securing enough busses, but had to pay more to get extra busses to match late registrations resulting in higher bus costs than anticipated.

8- SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

- **BBQ Picnic**
 - Wednesday evening May 17, 2017
 - 254 tickets sold at \$25.00 each totaling \$6,350.00
 - 254 Meals cost \$27.55 each totaling \$6,998.32
 - Net loss of \$648.32
 - Conclusion- good event, didn't calculate the service fee and tax in ticket price
- **Fort Sill Bus Tour**

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- Thursday May 18, 2017
 - 156 tickets sold at \$30.00 each totaling \$4,413.39
 - 156 seats cost \$22.83 each totaling \$3,562.18
 - Net profit of \$851.21
 - Conclusion- good tour, but didn't calculate bottled water and meal in ticket price
- **Cowboy Hall of Fame Bus Tour**
 - Friday May 19, 2017
 - 156 tickets sold at \$15.00 each totaling \$2,340.00
 - 156 seats cost \$5.77 each totaling \$900.00
 - Net profit of \$1,400.00
 - Conclusion- good tour
- **45th Infantry Division Bus Tour**
 - Friday May 19, 2017
 - 118 tickets sold at \$15.00 each totaling \$1,770.00
 - 156 seats cost \$7.63 each totaling \$900.00
 - Net profit of \$870.00
 - Conclusion- good tour
- **Ladies Luncheon**
 - Friday May 19, 2017
 - 77 tickets sold at \$25.00 each totaling \$1,925.00
 - 156 meals cost \$26.31 each totaling \$2,026.18
 - Net loss of \$101.18
 - Conclusion- good event, didn't calculate the service fee and tax in ticket price
- **Gold Star Luncheon**
 - Sponsored by 173d Airborne Brigade Foundation
 - Low attendance, but good event
- **Banquet**
 - Saturday May 20, 2017
 - 633 meals served
 - Conclusion- good event

9- PUBLIC RELATIONS

Reunion Promotion

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There were three major tools used to publicize and promote the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion

- **Sky Soldier Website**

The following webpages were created on the Sky Soldier website to promote attendance, provide reunion information and assist the Reunion Team in planning.

- 2017 Reunion Information
- 2017 Reunion Registration
- 2017 Reunion Hotels
- 2017 Reunion Schedule of Events
- 2017 Reunion List of Registrants
- 2017 Reunion Local Attractions
- 2017 Reunion Bus Tours Information
- 2017 Reunion Vendor Information
- 2017 Reunion List of Donors and Sponsors
- 2017 Reunion Planning Guide (for Reunion Team use)
- Pre-Reunion Briefing for Reunion Registrants

- **Sky Soldier Magazine**

The following items were submitted to be published in the quarterly Sky Soldier Magazines on six pages devoted to the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion.

- 2017 Reunion Information
- 2017 Reunion Registration Form
- 2017 Reunion Hotel Information
- 2017 Reunion Schedule of Events
- 2017 Reunion Local Attractions
- 2017 Reunion Vendor's Registration Form

- **Mass Emails**

- Periodic mass emails were sent to all Contacts in our Wild Apricot database on the following topics with imbedded hyperlinks to the respective Sky Soldier webpage to view more details.
 - 2017 Reunion Information
 - 2017 Reunion Registration Form

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- 2017 Reunion Hotel Information
- 2017 Reunion Schedule of Events
- 2017 Reunion Local Attractions
- 2017 Reunion Vendor's Registration Form
- "Drip Campaign"
 - A "Drip Campaign" was implement for a weekly email blast to all Contacts in the Sky Soldier database to highlight one of the local attractions in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.
 - Stories for about 15 local attractions were compiled in advance and were scheduled to be sent weekly on one highlighted attraction beginning about 4 months in advance of the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion.

10- FUND RAISING

- This an area that I want to tout one of our Chapter 18 Members for his outstanding contribution in this area.
- Bob Alan served as a platoon leader with 4th Bn. on Hill 875 and was a survivor on the errant 500 pound bomb dropped on his Company command.
- Bob went on to form and operate the largest floor covering company in Oklahoma before he totally lost his eyesight in 2001. Bob lives in Oklahoma City and is "well connected" to prominent individuals.
- Because of his efforts, he was responsible to secure funds to cover the printing expenses for the Reunion and Banquet brochures via paid ads from local businesses.
- Bob was personally responsible for getting a local establishment in donating the four 16 gallon kegs of tap beer along with the tap and pump equipment. Had the Sheraton Hotel allowed more than one donated keg per day, he would have been able to get more kegs.
- In addition, he was able to secure welcome letters from the Governor of Oklahoma and the Mayor of Oklahoma City.
- He was also responsible for secure the financial backing of the Oklahoma City Tourist Bureau, who also provided three ladies volunteers to assist our reunion registration process at the Sheraton Hotel.

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- This is a critical area that the Hosting Chapter needs to be successful to overcome the current \$99 Reunion Registration Fee.

CONCLUSION

- **Overall comments**
 - In my opinion, Chapter 18 did a magnificent job in hosting the 2017 Oklahoma Reunion with limited resources and having to compete with the Italy gathering a few months later.
 - I feel that the online registration process that was used for the first time had a few setbacks, which were overcome, and was very successful.
 - I also believe that the \$99 Reunion Registration Fee was successful, but the host Chapter really has to stick by the reunion budget in controlling costs particularly in the Hospitality Room and Transportation areas.
- **Major Recommendations**
 - Develop a written Reunion SOP
 - The most important recommendation that I can make is for the Board of Directors to establish a written policy and procedures for contracting for reunion hotels.
 - **Hotel Concierge**
 - The designated rep for locating a suitable hotel should be required to complete specify actions set forth on a written checklist.
 - The Hotel Rep should submit a request in writing to the potential hotels the following:
 - Free breakfast for all Attendees during the reunion period.
 - Free parking for the Attendees during the reunion period.
 - Permission to bring snacks, soft drinks, tea, coffee, popcorn, etc., into the Hospitality Room at no charge.
 - The ability to bring in unlimited kegs of tab beer on a daily basis into the Hospitality Room at no charge.
 - A minimum of 1 free room night for every 30 booked and paid hotel rooms.
 - No charges for Vendor Tables, electrical hookups, signage hanging, etc., in the Vendors Room.

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- All attending Medal of Honor recipients should be provided lodging at no charge during the stated reunion period.
- Free internet hook/W5 capability in all Attendee rooms.
- Free internet hookup/W5 capability in all meeting rooms.
- An American flag with pole and base in all meeting rooms.
- No charges for any meeting rooms.
- A meeting room provided free of charge large enough to seat at least 20 Reunion Team members for monthly planning meetings 4 hours in duration on the 2nd Saturday of each of 12 months prior to the reunion.
- An meeting room provided free of charge large enough to seat at least 20 Reunion Team members 3 days prior, during and 3 days after the reunion to serve as an Operations Center.
- Free coffee and water for the Operations Center whenever it is used.
- Free internet hookup/W5 capability in the Operations Center at any time it is used.
- And the most important point:
 - The designated hotel rep should **NOT** have the authority to sign a contract with a hotel **UNTIL after** the Executive Board has reviewed and approved the hotel contract in writing.

ATTACHMENTS (By Areas of Responsibility)

1- Registrations/ Financial Items

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2017 Oklahoma Reunion Survey.pdf
2017 Oklahoma Registration Form after April 15, 2017.pdf
2017 Oklahoma Reunion Schedule of Events.pdf
Agenda for Reunion Team Meeting- May 6, 2017.pdf
Badge Holder photo- 2017 Reunion.pdf
Fact Sheet for 2017 Oklahoma Reunion.pdf
Flow Chart- Session Stuffing Session.pdf
Job Description for Registration Desk Volunteers.pdf
List of Reunion Signage.pdf
Military Reunion Checklist.pdf
Op Plan for Name Tags, Badge Holders and Goodie Bags.pdf
Packing List for 2017 Ok Reunion.pdf
Planning Guide.pdf
Pre-Reunion Briefing to Registered Attendees- 5-4-2017.pdf
Reunion Discussion Paper dated June 2, 2008.pdf
Sample Name Tags for Badge Holders.pdf
Staff Nametags #1.pdf
Table of Contents for Reunion Booklet.pdf
USAA Goodie Bag.pdf
Work Schedule- 2017 Oklahoma Reunion.pdf

2- Hotel Items

Hotel Penalties Computations.pdf
MPI_SPCOEWebinar11_1128_HotelContracts.pdf
Scans of Plastic Room Keys.pdf

3- Hospitality Room Items

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Beer Keg Capacities.pdf

List of Hospitality Room Items.pdf

List of Products Needed for Hospitality Room.pdf

4- Banquet Items

Banquet 2017- Unit Seating Table Chart.pdf

Banquet 2017 -Welcome Sign.pdf

Banquet Brochure- Arial font.pdf

5- Vendor Room Items

Email Solicitation to Prospective Vendors- 2017.pdf

PayPal Here Categories.pdf

PayPal Here Items.pdf

PayPal Here Profile Settings.pdf

Schedule of Fees for Vendor Room- 2017.pdf

Vendor Room Application and Contract- 2017- Fillable Form.pdf

Vendor Room Packet for 2017 Oklahoma Reunion.pdf

6- Meeting Room Items

Ladies Luncheon Diagram.pdf

Meeting Room Diagrams- 5-11-2017.pc

7- Transportation Items

Bus Tour Schedules.pdf

Responsibilities for Friday Bus Tours.pdf

8- Special Activities Items

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BBQ Picnic tickets- Green.pdf

List of Oklahoma City Attractions.pdf

Table of Contents for Drip Campaign Letters.pdf

9- Public Relation Items

Mission Statement on Letterhead.pdf

Welcome Letter from Governor of Oklahoma dated 2-6-2017.pdf

Welcome Letter from Mayor of Oklahoma City dated 1-6-2017.pdf

10- Fund Raising Items

Donor Solicitation Packet- generic.pdf

Letter to Byron's Liquor Store.pdf

List of Walmark Grants.pdf

Walmart Corporate - Apply For Grants.pdf