



**31st Infantry Regiment Association
Annual General Membership Meeting
August 23, 2008**

The meeting was called to order by Commander, Col (Ret) John (Ron) Corson at 10:12:00 a.m.

Opening Remarks

Commander Corson welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Commander Corson stated that the gavel had been turned over, and that was that the extent of the documentation and records that changed hands. The Association has in the past maintained records of meetings however, with the realization that the former secretary of the Association was no longer attending meetings the records of the last few years have been lacking. Communication issues are recognized, and Commander Corson intends to remedy during his term.

Commander Corson stated that at this meeting a number of the Executive Board members were not able to attend due to business or personal issues and; therefore, no formal Board meetings had been held. He stated that he had met individually with the Board Members who were in attendance and with senior advisors and former Commanders. The focus and objective of this meeting would be to resolve outstanding issues and set precedence for moving forward.

With that said, Commander Corson asked that he receive a motion to accept the minutes of the Annual Meeting of August 2007, which are noted as non-existent. The motion was made by George Lavezzi and seconded by Gerald Carlson. No discussion ensued and the motion was accepted by the body.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report was distributed and reviewed stating assets of \$86,604.18, liabilities and equity of \$59,641.56, retained earnings and net income of \$26,422.62. It was remarked that the Association remains solvent.

Motion to the floor to accept the Treasurer's report as read, subject to audit, made by Gerald Carlson.

Motion seconded by James Coppelar.

No further discussion ensued and the Treasurer's Report was unanimously accepted (subject to audit) by the membership.

Old Business

- **Reset and Confirmation of the Reunion Schedule 2009-2014.**

Commander Corson reviewed the 2009 reunion plans. It was stated that the 2009 Reunion was slated for Ft Drum, NY by the Board last year. It was understood that as long as the 4-31, 10th Mountain Division was not deployed the reunion would be held in NY. A consideration was on the table that should the 4-31 be re-deployed prior to 2009, Washington DC would be a consideration for the 2009 reunion if a local coordinator and reunion committee could be secured. It was recognized that the direction of the 2009 reunion was misinterpreted by many over the past year.

Commander Corson reported that Reunion 2009 would be held in Watertown, New York. Hotels have been secured in Watertown and the Ft Drum Commons would be used for the banquet. The 4-31 will be hosting the reunion and have proposed a "Day with the Polar Bears" which would include a live fire Small Unit Air Assault Demonstration followed by a picnic with the Polar Bear Soldiers that participated in the demonstration. Notation was made that the dates have been moved by one week as to those previously reported and it will be held the last weekend of August (Specific dates not mentioned are Thursday 27 August to Sunday 30 August 2009).

Commander Corson reported that he was aware of a proposal on the table to host the 2010 reunion in Reno, NV (Tim Miller, D/6-31 Coordinator). There was also a proposal to hold the 2010 reunion in Columbus, GA to coincide with the Fort Benning Infantry Museum and Walk of Honor dedication ceremonies (Gen Sam Wetzel, 4-31 Coordinator).

Commander Corson opened discussion for the proposed sequence of Columbus in 2010 and Reno in 2011. Tim Miller reported that he currently has negotiated prices with the Atlantis Hotel/Casino in Reno that would be in line with the prices of this year. Tim could not commit that there would not be a price increase if the Reno location was moved to 2011.

The discussion briefly turned to the 31st memorial project and its dedication coinciding with the Ft Benning events. Louis Dominguez remarked that although commitments may be made to have the statue completed in time for 2010, in his practical experience delays are common and it was his recommendation to pursue Reno for 2010, and Columbus for 2011.

Motion to accept Reno NV for Reunion 2010, and Columbus GA for Reunion 2011 was made by Louis Dominguez.

Seconded by numerous members of the body.

Discussion was opened with the only inquiry if there was a contingency plan if the 4-31 was deployed by 2009. Commander Corson stated no contingency was in place.

Unanimously accepted by the membership.

Final - Reunion schedule 2009-2011

2009 Watertown NY (host 4-31, SGM (Ret) Sunny Mitchell, coordinator).

August 27-30, 2009

2010 Reno NV (host D/6-31, Tim Miller coordinator, 6-31 Bn CO Jack Logan assisting coordinator). Dates not determined at this time.

2011 Columbus GA (host 4-31 Gen Sam Wetzel, coordinator). Dates not determined at this time.

Reunion locales beyond 2011 were not discussed. It was commented that the location of the reunion is dependent on volunteers stepping up to the plate to accept the responsibility of Reunion Coordinator.

- **Proposed 31st Infantry Memorial *i.e.* “*My Pet Rock*” (attachment letter with enclosures for review)**

The 31st Memorial project plans were distributed in letter form. Commander Corson presented an overview of the proposed designs for the memorial. It was noted that bronze plaques, with verbiage approved by the Department of Army will be added to the memorial in a number as deemed necessary to provide an accurate description of the history of the regiment. The plaques are estimated at a cost of \$1,200.00. The verbiage of the plaque(s) is not something that will be presented to the membership but will be determined and voted upon by the Executive Board in adherence to the DoA requirements.

The slab – that which will hold the base of the memorial is also not a point of discussion. The Ft Benning Infantry Museum and Walk of Honor will present the requirements for all slabs in accordance with the engineers and architects on the project. The slab could be concrete or granite and has not been defined at this time.

The third point of clarification is that whether one is looking at the Regimental crest (Polar Bear sitting position) or the statues of the Polar Bear – the correct depiction of the Polar Bear is looking left. The only time the Polar Bear should face to the right is on shoulder epaulet.

The estimated cost of the designs was noted as being on the high side and it was believed that the actual cost would be somewhat less than the proposal states.

Design concept #1

Bronze cast bear approximately 2' in height on a pure white snow rough cut granite boulder with bronze plaque(s) engraved with the 31st Infantry Regiment historical info.

Estimated cost of \$24,300 received from the Columbus Memorial Co., Columbus, GA.

Design concept #2

A larger pure white snow rough cut granite boulder with a 2' bear, sculptured from the same stone. Bronze plaques same as concept #1.

Estimated cost of \$29,700 (incorrectly stated on the handout as 37,700) received from the Columbus Memorial Co., Columbus, GA.

Design concept #3

Bronze cast bear 2' in height on a solid jet black polished granite stone approximately 5' in height. Bronze plaques same as concept #1.

Estimated cost of \$28,200 received from the Columbus Memorial Co, Columbus, GA.

Design concept #4

Bronze cast bear approximately 2' in height on a gray/off white rough cut granite boulder with bronze plaque(s) engraved with the 31st Infantry Regiment historical info.

Estimated cost of \$24,200 received from the Columbus Memorial Co., Columbus, GA.

Discussion ensued on the various designs and material elements. Concern was expressed that the white granite is a maintenance issue. Maintenance of the statue would be the financial responsibility of the Association. Concern was expressed that a bronze bear is not a good representation of the Polar Bear, that it should be white in color symbolic of the Polar Bear. Discussion as to whether colored bronze or granite would be the material of choice for a white bear. Concern was expressed as to the location of the memorial and whether sufficient security was in place.

Gen Wetzel spoke briefly regarding the museum location. Although the location is not through the gates of Ft Benning it is on Benning property and would be properly guarded and secured against potential vandalism and theft. The museum and walk were reported as a one hundred million dollar project with over 80 million already raised. There are bricks on the Walk of Honor that can be purchased for \$250.00 and will included a small replica of your brick (order forms and concept documents are available for viewing in the Quartermaster room). There will also be parade grounds and the projected opening of the complex will be 20th March 2010.

A fifth design concept was created by the membership, based on the various elements of discussion heard from the floor.

Design concept#5 -

A white granite sculptured 2' bear
A polished granite rectangular/square 5' base, color to be determined (will research blood stone granite which appears black in color with red specks however when water is put on the stone it appears to bleed)
Bronze plaques as presented in concept #1
Slab as previously discussed

Motion to approve the design concept #5, as stated and appropriate funds not to exceed \$35,000 was made by Dale Mills.

Discussion of available funding was raised as the Treasurer's report does not reflect sufficient available cash to appropriate to this project. Although there is in excess of \$80,000 in cash, over \$59,000 is line item appropriated to other funds.

A motion to approve the design concept #5, as stated and appropriate funds (subject to available funds) not to exceed \$35,000 was made by Bill McMullen.

Seconded by Tim Miller and Jerry Carlson.

No discussion was heard.

Unanimously accepted by the membership.

Notation: request was put to the floor by Gary Stafford, to consider the availability of a replica sized monument for sale to the membership. It was thought although an excellent idea, premature to discuss at this juncture.

- **Establishment of a Nomination Committee for a Slate of Officers for the 2009 Reunion**

Commander Corson reported that there would be no new officers elected this year.

The terms of officers are being reviewed and positions with alternate terms will be proposed to the membership. Alternate term expiration will assist newly elected officers in as much as there will be an element of experience on the board. In the past terms would expire and Board members held the position as no nominations were proposed.

Charlie Tapp (D/6-31) will be the chair, as discussed at the 2007 San Antonio meeting. Commander Corson requested volunteers to work with Charlie to create a nomination slate for the 2009 Ft Drum reunion election.

Regional directors and their responsibilities were also reviewed and discussed. There is a great deal of internal work needed to fix the issues that have evolved over time. Commander Corson assured the membership that the issues are recognized and presented

the concept of a nomination committee as the first step to correct the officer position and term issues.

A brief discussion of the bylaws and constitution of the Association ensued. Sam Wetzel stated he last reviewed the bylaws and constitution and amended according in 1997. At the 2006 Syracuse meeting, David Kennedy (D/6-31) was charged with a review of the bylaws to ensure Robert's Rules and quorums were being met. David reported on his progress in San Antonio. The recommendations from David's review will be addressed as will the content to ensure the bylaws and constitution is an accurate statement of what is currently being done by the Association.

New Business

- **Revising the Format and Content of the Association Newsletter**

Commander Corson stated that the newsletter is primarily the project of Karl Lowe and Vin Zike and as they are not in attendance this year, this subject will not be discussed at length.

However it is recognized that the format and content of the newsletter needs to be reviewed so that it is more than a recount of our wonderful history and reunion information. The newsletter needs to be more focused on such topics as reaching out to our membership, reaching out to the active duty 4-31 troops so that they are aware of the Association, reporting on current business and activities that the Association participates in and used as a recruiting tool.

A suggestion was made as to include a regional map and regional director contact information.

This topic will be discussed further with both Karl Lowe and Vin Zike and positive change will be presented to ensure our newsletter is effectively meeting both the membership and Association needs.

Sam Wetzel, Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, spoke briefly to emphasize to the membership the importance of documenting their personal experiences and forwarding the same along to Karl Lowe for inclusion in the history of the regiment.

- **Association Reunion 2009 – Fort Drum and Watertown NY**

A brief review of planned events for next year was presented; hotels in the Watertown area have been secured and events such as the banquet will be held at the Fort Drum Commons (?), an air assault, and live ammo demonstration followed by a Picnic with the Polar Bears. SGM Mitchell will be working on tours and such.

Other Business

- **No Election of Officers Slated**

One position that is not an elected but appointed position is that of Secretary. The constitution and bylaws of the Association state that all elected positions must be full Association members. An Associate member has neither participatory privilege in Association business or discussion nor do they possess voting rights. In light of the fact that the Secretary position is appointed, not elected it is open to be held by that of an Associate member. Commander Corson announced that Mary Doyon, Associate member, has been appointed to the position of Secretary.

- **Korean War Vets Association**

Robert Tibbs reported that he has had the opportunity to spend time in Columbia and has been appointed as an honorary member of the Columbian Korea War Vets Association. He stated that he would like to be able to purchase lapel pins to present to them. Robert was advised to contact Vin Zike regarding such an item.

- **Raffle Prizes**

Commander Corson advised that raffle tickets will be sold for a number of items. Tickets will be available throughout the day.

- **San Antonio Reunion DVD**

Chaplain Bill Burns announced that last year in San Antonio they had a videographer and there is a four DVD set available should anyone be interested in a copy. This could be a potential fund raiser for the Association.

Commander Corson announced that if anyone is interested in the DVD set they should see Chaplain Burns or Mary Doyon.

- **Newspaper Article**

Louis Dominguez reported that the Daily Breeze newspaper featured an article about this reunion on the front page of the Saturday, August 23rd edition. Based on the article Louis had already received a few calls – one from a Bravo Company 6-31 brother interested in attending the reunion and one from a local man whose father served with the 31st and has photos of a much earlier Shanghai Bowl ceremony. Both men will be attending the banquet this evening.

- **California Veteran's Assistance**

A representative spoke briefly to advise all members that the California Veteran's assistance program is available should a need arise. Pamphlets and business cards will be available on the registration desk.

Hearing no other business, the 2008 31st Regiment Association General Membership meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Doyon
Secretary, 31st Infantry Regiment Association
Distribution electronically with attachments:

Ron Corson, Commander
Vin Zike, Vice Commander/Quartermaster
Karl Lowe, Sr. Director/Historian
John Cornelson, Treasurer
Jack Considine, Membership Chair
Sam Wetzel, Honorary Col of the Regiment

Regional Directors
Northeast - Ed Bettis
Mid-Atlantic - Bill Owen
Southeast - Noah Halfacre
Great Lakes - Don Deem
Mid-west - Jerry Carlson
West - Houston Turner

Published on the 31st Infantry Regiment Association website
www.31stinfantry.org under the Association Tab – Annual Meeting Minutes