



Issue 1  
Volume 31  
May 2023

# THE CANOPY

NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA ALL AIRBORNE CHAPTER

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*Connecting sky  
soldiers, past and  
present.*

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## THIRTY YEARS

The chapter celebrated **thirty years** in April! What an accomplishment! The event was marked by a lunch, several displays, and honors presented.

Decorations included historical uniforms, a chapter memory board, a slideshow of our members' younger days, a specially commissioned cake, and a congratulatory letter from Governor DeSantis. Story continues on page 4.



## CHERRY JUMP BY JOHN GOODYEAR

Chapter member John Goodyear presents a tale of his cherry jump – the first jump a paratrooper makes with their first airborne unit. See the story on page 6.

## AIRBORNE UNIT UPDATES

101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault), held a transfer of authority ceremony and a combined arms capabilities demonstration on March 31, 2023, at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base, Romania, page **10**. 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division PAO provides an update on arctic activities this year, page **12**.

## DIRECTORY & CHAPTER CALENDAR

### CHAPTER OFFICERS

<b>Chairman</b>	Tony Alger	(719) 310-8951
<b>Vice Chairman</b>	Jerry Brust	(405) 823-4483
<b>Treasurer</b>	Heath Davenport	(571) 641-9057
<b>Secretary</b>	Rich Troop	(610) 823-7505
<b>Sergeant at Arms</b>	Frank Dochniak	(352) 259-2441
<b>Chaplain</b>	Lee Damon	(352) 812-4492
<b>Service Officer</b>	Joyce Damon	(352) 208-4963
<b>Recruiting / Villages</b>	Tony Alger	(719) 310-8951
<b>Recruiting / Ocala</b>	Tig Blackman	(352) 591-4752
<b>Exec Committee</b>	Tig Blackman	(352) 591-4752
<b>Exec Committee</b>	Frank Dochniak	(352) 259-2441
<b>Canopy Editor</b>	Ron Dahlgren	(407) 577-1746

**Note:** We will not have chapter meetings or newsletters for the months of June, July, or August.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, May 13 <sup>th</sup> , 1300 hrs	Chapter Meeting at VFW Post 8083
Sunday, May 14 <sup>th</sup>	Mother's Day
Monday, May 22 <sup>nd</sup>	All American Week at Ft. Bragg
Monday, May 29 <sup>th</sup>	Memorial Day

## FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings fellow paratroopers and esteemed members of the North Central Florida All Airborne Chapter,

As the new editor of "The Canopy," I am excited and honored to take up the mantle and continue the legacy established by our previous editor, Fran Dolan. I would like to express my gratitude to the chapter and its officers for entrusting me with the responsibility of keeping our community informed, engaged, and connected.



Fran's exceptional dedication and commitment over the past decade have been truly inspiring, and I am grateful for the strong foundation he has laid for this newsletter.

As you may have noticed, the format of "The Canopy" has undergone a radical change in this issue. We are constantly looking for ways to improve and adapt, so as I settle into my new role, please expect additional tweaks to the format in the coming issues. Rest assured, our mission to keep you informed and connected with the airborne community remains our top priority.

I wholeheartedly welcome your input and involvement as we move forward together. If you have any concerns, comments, news, or events to share with our community, please reach out to me by email at <[ronald.dahlgren@gmail.com](mailto:ronald.dahlgren@gmail.com)>. Your contributions are invaluable in making "The Canopy" what it is.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to serve our airborne family. Here's to a bright future for "The Canopy" and our association as a whole.

Airborne All The Way!

*Ron Dahlgren* Editor, The Canopy

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I trust everyone had a nice Easter. I know I did. The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was a smashing success! Lots of great food and socializing going on. Frank Rasbury did a super job being our featured speaker. He also led us in the Airborne song "Blood Upon the Risers." Airborne! Should be some nice pictures of the event. We acquired two new members since I last talked with you all. Please welcome Adrian Stocker and Chris Fyfe to our chapter.

Our Chapter awarded the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Medal and certificate to Marco Saucedo of West Port High School. He's a great JROTC Cadet and was in charge of the cadets that helped with our last Christmas Party.

Let's also remember all the mothers out there for Mother's Day. We owe them a lot especially for putting up with us paratroopers cause we can be a hand full. Happy Mother's Day to you moms out there.

Memorial Day is a time for honoring our fallen service members and there will be many events around the area to celebrate this day so please attend one if you are able.

Our last meeting for the season before our "summer hiatus" will be a normal one if there is such a thing. We've been going strong these last few months with celebrations, picnics and parades etc. We'll have the meeting at the VFW May 13 at 1:00 p.m. Hope to see you there. If you're coming to the Colorado Springs area, let me know. Just bring your oxygen. I live at almost 9000 ft. And lastly, be safe over the summer. We want to see your smiling faces at the September meeting so until then Airborne All the Way and see you on the manifest in September!

*Tony Alger*, Chairman



## 2023 CANOPY BOOSTERS

*Thank you for your support!*

Tig Blackman  
Heath Davenport  
Nick Harty  
Darla & Jay Tatman  
Howard Northrup

Jerry & Robby Brust  
Frank Dochniak  
Regis Rossa  
Marianne & George Zablocki



# THIRTY YEARS OF THE NCFAA



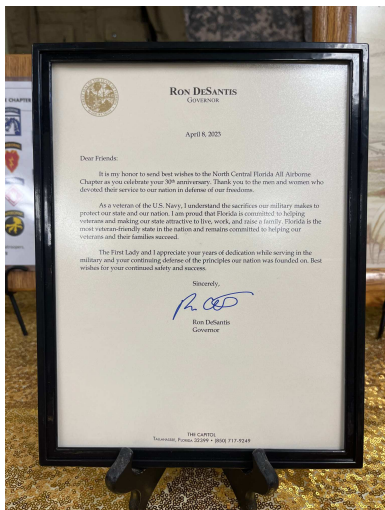
On April 8th, our airborne association gathered at the VFW Post 8083 to commemorate our 30th anniversary, a milestone that speaks to the enduring spirit and camaraderie of our community. The celebration was a delightful affair, filled with laughter, nostalgia, and a shared sense of pride in our airborne heritage.

Guests were treated to a delicious catered lunch, complete with a specially decorated cake that showcased our association's milestone. The atmosphere was one of joy and appreciation as we came together to honor our history and the bonds that hold us together.

Our charter member, Frank Rasbury, graced the occasion as the featured speaker. His inspiring words reminded us of the importance of our association and the values that have brought us together through the years.



The event featured a stunning array of displays showcasing our chapter's cherished memories. A captivating slideshow took us on a journey through time, highlighting our members during their years of service. Historical uniforms, flags, and patches from across the airborne world adorned the room, reminding us of the proud lineage we are a part of.





Awards and recognitions were presented to several important individuals who have made significant contributions to our association. Their dedication and service are testaments to the strength and unity of our community.

As you browse through the photo spread, we hope you enjoy reliving the memories of this special day. The 30th anniversary celebration was truly an event to remember, and we look forward to many more years of camaraderie, service, and airborne pride.



## CHERRY JUMP BY JOHN GOODYEAR

"It's a little early. Why don't you wait in the shade under the wing? These damn birds are hotter 'n hell inside in this weather." These words were spoken by the co-pilot of the old C-46 that was flying our drop mission. I was glad to sit down because the harness was tight, and the chute was heavy and already cutting into my shoulders as we stood waiting to board the plane. I leaned back on my backpack and looked the plane over. "Looks like a pregnant DC-3," I thought. I listened to parts of other conversations. "I'm surprised many of these 46's are around. Thought most of them were shot down, flying the hump in World War II. Air Commandos still have a few. They're a pretty good jump." Conversation died down, and I became occupied with my own thoughts.

I remembered parts of the MACO briefing. Jump altitude 1250 feet... winds seven to nine knots... make sure you have a reverse bite in your static line... The anchor line cable runs from the ceiling in the front to the floor in the rear. The warnings if we should become entangled in the air, if we should land in water, trees, or power lines, if we should get hung up behind the plane. Would we be cut loose? It made me think of the airborne song "Blood on the Risers" that we had sung and had become popular. How did it start?

*He was just a rookie trooper, and he surely shook with fright;*

*He checked all his equipment and made sure his pack was tight;*

*He had to sit and listen to those awful engines roar*

*He ain't gonna jump no more.*

*"Is everybody happy?" cried the sergeant, looking up,*

*Our Hero feebly answered "Yes," and then stood him up,*

*He leaped right out into the blast, his static line unhooked,*

*He ain't gonna jump no more."*

I thought, "Wow! What am I doing here? I guess everyone has to break his cherry and make his first jump with his operational unit. At least I won't be a five-jump commando anymore, and that \$110.00 a month sounds mighty nice. Ha, ha, look at the Major sweat. He hasn't jumped for a while, either. Looks like some of the other men are more nervous than I. That damn song again:

*"He counted long, he counted loud, he waited for the shock,*

*He felt the wind, he felt the clouds, he felt the awful drop,*

*He jerked his cord, the silk spilled out and wrapped around his legs,*

*He ain't gonna jump no more!*

*The risers wrapped around his neck, connectors cracked his dome,*

*The lines were snarled and tied in knots around his skinny bones,*

*His canopy became his shroud, he hurtled to the ground,*



*He ain't gonna jump no more!"*

The orders, "On your feet! Load in reverse order!" brought me back to reality. I struggled to my feet and waddled over to the plane. As I climbed in, I noticed that the horizontal stabilizer was right behind the door, "My God! That'll cut us in two when we exit." I made a comment and a captain assured me that I couldn't hit it if I tried.

"What about the chute catching it?" I asked.

"Man, that's what the five-foot extension on your static line is for."

That reassured me about as much as the rigger guarantee; "If your chute won't open, bring it back, and we'll give you a new one."

As soon as we were airborne, we received the twenty-minute warning, which started the longest wait was over. I knew that psychologists had found that the wait before a jump takes as much out of one as a hard day's work, and I was beginning to agree. I went through the briefings again in my mind and kept telling myself not to worry. Putting my head down on my reserve, I tried to sleep, but the butterflies in my stomach had become a stampeding herd, and it was difficult.

I thought about our Hero again.

*"The days he's lived and loved and laughed kept running through his mind,*

*He thought about the girl back home, the one he'd left behind,*

*He thought about the medics and wondered what they'd find,*

*He ain't gonna jump no more!*

*The ambulance was on the spot, the jeeps were running wild,*

*The medics jumped and screamed with glee, they rolled their sleeves and smiled,*

*For it had been a week or more since last a chute had failed,*

*He ain't gonna jump no more!"*

I was elbowed in the ribs. "Red light."

I knew I had six minutes to go, and the butterflies got worse. The crew chief took the doors off each side of the plane and the roar of the engines and the rush of wind made it impossible to talk without yelling.

At least it was cooler.

I unfastened my snap fastener from the carrying handle of my reserve in anticipation of the jumpmaster's commands.

"Get ready," said the jumpmaster, thrusting his hands straight out in front of him. I planted my feet in preparation for the next command.

"Stand up." I struggled to my feet. Being crowded in the plane and wearing two chutes, a rifle, and other equipment made us heavy and awkward. By pushing and pulling, all of us managed to get to our feet.

"Hook up." I reached up and hooked my snap fastener to the anchor line cable while trying to keep my balance in the swaying plane.

"Check static line." I traced the routing of the static line of the man in front of me to make sure it would not catch on anything. I hit him in the butt to signal everything was all right and, at the same time, felt the punch from my rear.

"Check equipment." Steadying myself with one hand, I started checking my equipment: helmet, quick-release box, belly band, and reserve.

"Sound off with equipment check." I heard the stamping feet and the count coming down the aisle; ten okay, nine okay... the man behind me yelled, "six okay, five okay." I felt the floor continue to vibrate as the count went forward to jumpmaster.

The safety NCO held up one finger; one minute to go. The plane was lurching badly, and it was becoming more difficult to stand. We all became grim because when the winds are rough at jump altitude, it means it's windy on the ground, and we would be in for some hard landings. I thought of the final two verses of the song.

*"He hit the ground, the sound was "SPLAT," his blood went spurting high,*

*His comrades then were heard to say, "A helluva way to die."*

*He lay there rolling 'round in the welter of his gore.*

*He ain't gonna jump no more.*

*There was blood upon the risers, there were brains upon the chute,*

*Intestines were a dangling from his paratrooper's boots,*

*They picked him up still in his chute and poured him from his boots.*

*He ain't gonna jump no more!"*

"Stand in the door." The jumpmaster stepped into the door on my side, and the other stick leader stepped into the door on the other side. Clutching the bite in my static line, I shuffled down the aisle until I was touching the man in front of me. The prop blast and the roar of the engines were even worse here, and I could see the distorted features of the jumpmaster as he leaned out of the open door looking for the "T"

Green light. "Go." The jumpmaster leaped out, and the safety NCO tapped out the other stick leader. Numbers two and three quickly followed. The throbbing anchor line cable started going crazy from the tugging static lines, the floor was vibrating from the shuffling, pounding feet, and as I approached the door, the whole tail of the plane seemed to be jumping up and down as the jumpers flung themselves from the speeding plane. I watched the man in front of me jump into the blast and be whisked away so fast that he was only a blur. In a split second, everything started happening as if by second nature; I planted my feet in the door, one slightly ahead



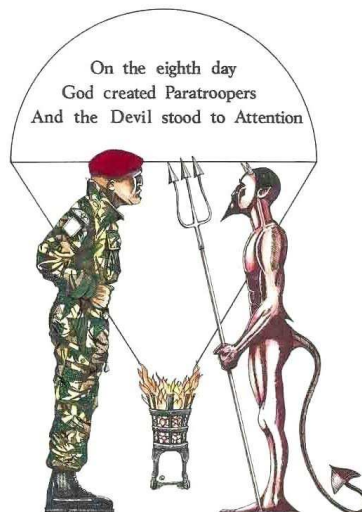
of the other, reached out, and placed one hand on either side of the door on the outside of the plane. Looking straight ahead, I jumped up and out as hard as I could.

Before the prop blast really hit, I had my head down, my hands on my reserve, and my feet together. The blast hit, spun me to the rear, and hurled me sway. I remembered my first point of performance, check body position and count. I started counting, one thousand, two thousand; again, the same amazing phenomenon. I knew that I was plummeting through the air at more than a hundred miles per hour, but the world seemed to be in slow motion. I watched the ground moving around above the toes of my boots, but there was no sensation of falling. Instead of a roaring bucking of the previous second, I was hanging still in absolutely quiet gravityless pace. I continued to count, hoping my chute was spilling out properly behind me... Three thousand..., four thousand. I heard a bang; my head was yanked down onto my chest, the leg straps tightened painfully into my groin, and it seemed as if a giant hand was trying to push me right through my harness.

Then it was all over, and I was floating peacefully one thousand feet above the ground. I threw my head back and checked my canopy. The sun shining through the green silk looked like a giant halo, and I decided my e color was Army green. Making sure I didn't collide with anybody during descent, I untied my rifle from my left leg and slid the canopy release covers up the risers.

All the while, I was painfully aware that the ground was rushing up to meet me at an unbelievable speed. Everytime I looked down it seemed to be coming faster. I had to prepare to land. Jumping out of a plane was fun, but that landing jazz was bad news. On windy days, it was something like running into a brick wall and tripping at the same time.

I forced my legs together and pointed my toes. That unseen force kept trying to make me draw my legs up to keep them away from the ground. It took all of my concentration to force them back down while trying to keep them relaxed and my knees slightly bent. "Here comes the ground like an express train. Keep those legs down! Hit, shift, and rotate!", just as I had been taught, and come up running. I had to run that chute down before it pulled me off my feet and started dragging me. After collapsing the chute, I felt myself to make sure that I had two arms, two legs, and a head, and then I felt really good. I had made my cherry jump end was in one piece.





## 101<sup>ST</sup> ROTATES ROMANIAN BRIGADE

Story by [Staff Sgt. Malcolm Cohens-Ashley](#)  
[2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division \(AA\) Public Affairs](#)



**Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base, Romania** – Soldiers assigned to the 1st Brigade Combat Team “BASTOGNE” and the 2nd Brigade Combat Team “STRIKE”, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), held a transfer of authority ceremony and a combined arms capabilities demonstration on March 31, 2023, at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base, Romania.



The 2nd Brigade Combat Team cased their brigade colors marking the end of their deployment in support of Operation European Assure Deter and Reinforce, while 1st Brigade Combat Team uncased their Brigade colors, officially symbolizing the transfer of authority from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

“We welcome the Bastogne Brigade here in Southeastern Europe, I know they will maintain the same level of mission focus that the Strike Brigade has over the last nine months,” said Ma j. Gen. JP McGee, Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). “Since June 6, 1944, on the beaches of Normandy, France, this division has repeatedly answered the Nation’s call in every major conflict; the Screaming Eagles of today are ready to support our Allies to preserve the long-lasting stability in Europe that our predecessors fought and died to secure.”



While being primarily located in Romania for the past nine-months, the 2nd Brigade Combat Team conducted rigorous training with various NATO partners and allies across the continent of Europe.





“From the sunny Aegean Coast in Greece to boreal forests high above the Arctic circle in Finland; from NATO’s northern frontier in Estonia, to its premier training areas in Germany and many other places in between, we trained,” stated the Commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Col. Ed Matthaïdëss. “In doing what Soldiers do best, training, we built friendships and everlasting memories with the Romanian armed forces.”

While the 2nd Brigade Combat Team has completed its mission, 1st Brigade Combat Team looks forward to continuing assurance, deterrence and the reinforcement of NATO partners and allies through joint interoperability, readiness and lethality.

“The unfurling of our colors here in Romania signifies a new chapter in the First Brigade Combat Team’s story,” remarked the Commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Col. Kevin R. Sharp. “Bastogne is eager to build upon the phenomenal nine-month endeavor of our brother and sisters in STRIKE Brigade. Together with our Eastern European Partners, we will continue to work to enhance the joint readiness, lethality and interoperability that underpins the NATO alliance of the last 74 years.”

The day concluded with a combined U.S. Army and Romanian Military capabilities demonstration. The combined arms capabilities demonstration included U.S. and allied Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), the Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division, the Romanian 9th Mechanized Brigade, the 572nd Puma Squadron and the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.





## 11TH AIRBORNE DIVISION: A YEAR OF TRIUMPHS AND MILESTONES



The past year has been a whirlwind of activity for the 11th Airborne Division, with their dedication and expertise taking them all over the globe to participate in exercises and celebrate significant milestones. From Arctic training to Army-level competitions, the Division has made its mark as a premier force in airborne operations.

A recent article in Army Magazine, titled "Arctic Warfare Heats Up: Unique Division Specializes in Cold-Weather Operations," delves into the Division's unique mission in the Arctic and showcases their specialized skills and adaptability in frigid environments.

In the first few months of 2023 alone, the 11th Airborne Division has participated in numerous exercises and events, including:

- Arctic Angels Winter Games at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, in January
- Arctic Forge in Finland, supported by Soldiers from 1/11 in February





- Celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Division
- The 1st annual all-women's jump in March, an airborne operation planned, led, and executed by women from across the Division
- Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center exercise in Yukon Training Area, Alaska, which concluded on April 5th and saw participation from over 8,000 individuals and 12 different companies



Beyond these impressive exercises, the Division's soldiers have excelled in several Army-level competitions. Notably, 1/11 secured 9th place in the Lacerda Cup Army Combatives Competition, 6th BEB from 2/11 achieved 7th place in the Best Sapper Competition, and the CBRN teams from 70th BEB, 1/11, and 95th Chemical Company triumphed with 1st and 2nd place finishes in the Army Best CBRN Competition.

As we move into the summer months, the 11th Airborne Division is gearing up for more training and exercises, including the 1st Annual Arctic Angels Rendezvous Week in June. This event will celebrate the past, present, and future of the Division and honor the men and women who have contributed to its storied history.

For additional photos, videos, and updates, visit [dvidshub.net/unit/11thABNDiv](http://dvidshub.net/unit/11thABNDiv) or follow the Division's social media feeds. We extend our gratitude to Staff Sgt. Michael Sword, Public Affairs NCOIC of the 11th Airborne Division, for providing this comprehensive update and look forward to sharing more stories of the Division's achievements in the future.





## USASOC VETERAN TO BECOME 17TH SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY

The US Army has announced the selection of Command Sgt. Maj. Michael R. Weimer, a distinguished Special Forces soldier, as the 17th Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA). Weimer is set to succeed the current SMA, Michael Grinston, in August 2023.

With a decorated career spanning over two decades in special operations, Weimer enlisted in the Army in 1993 and completed the Special Forces Assessment and Selection course in 1994. He earned his Green Beret in 1996 and went on to serve as a Special Forces weapons sergeant. Over the years, Weimer has held multiple positions within the 7th Special Forces Group and Army Special Operations Command, gaining invaluable experience in U.S. Central and Southern Command areas of responsibility.

Weimer's impressive list of accolades includes the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with two "V" devices and five oak leaf clusters, the Purple Heart, the Joint Commendation Medal, and the Army Commendation Medal, also with "V" devices. Prior to his current role as the senior enlisted leader of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, he served as the top NCO with Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan from 2019 to 2020, and as the senior enlisted leader for U.S. Special Operations Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. Weimer also holds a Bachelor of Science degree in strategic studies and defense analysis from Norwich University.

Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. James C. McConville expressed confidence in Weimer's ability to lead the Army's NCO Corps, describing him as an "incredible Soldier" dedicated to serving the Army and its families. As SMA, Weimer will become the senior enlisted advisor to the Army chief of staff and a public advocate for soldier welfare, following in the footsteps of Grinston, who has been known for his emphasis on a people-first culture in the Army and his "this is my squad" initiative.

Weimer remains focused on his current responsibilities, ensuring that Soldiers and families at USASOC have the necessary resources for their wellbeing and readiness. With his extensive background in special operations, the Army can expect a seasoned and dedicated leader as the 17th Sergeant Major of the Army.



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## THE CANOPY

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