



Issue 7  
Volume 31  
Feb 2024

# The Canopy

North Central Florida All Airborne Chapter

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*Connecting sky  
soldiers, past  
and present.*

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Photo by Darren Cinatl

## The All Airborne Battalion

President and founding member of The All Airborne Battalion talks to The Canopy about the organization's mission and operations, **page 4.**

## From the chapter

January Meeting; the chapter has a new Vice Chairman, **page 8.**

## Airborne Unit updates

82nd Airborne Division Artillery conducts medical training, jumps into Sicily DZ **page 12.**

## Directory & Chapter Calendar

Chapter Officers		
<b>Chairman</b>	Tony Alger	(719) 310-8951
<b>Vice Chairman</b>	Gary Blasczienski	(757) 602-9164
<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>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>	Frank Dochniak	(352) 259-2441
<b>Canopy Editor</b>	Ron Dahlgren	(407) 577-1746

### Upcoming Events

Saturday, Feb 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1300 hrs	Chapter Meeting at VFW Post 8083
Wednesday, Feb 14 <sup>th</sup>	Valentine's Day

### From The Editor

Airborne and All The Way, troopers! You'll find some great content in this month's issue. Darren Cinatl from the All Airborne Battalion is a real encyclopedia when it comes to airborne operations and Gary's background is certainly unique - boats, in the Army! I've got a few irons in the fire for upcoming stories. Exciting times are ahead. Have you spent time as a recruiter? Have you jumped static-line since you left active duty? Let me know!

Get in touch with me at <[ronald.dahlgren@gmail.com](mailto:ronald.dahlgren@gmail.com)>.

Airborne All The Way!

*Ron Dahlgren*

Editor, The Canopy

<https://www.the-canopy.org>



## Chairman's Message

Last month's meeting was very interesting because we had a Bagpiper for our guest speaker. I hope everyone that was there enjoyed his presentation. I sure did. The next meeting I've got a U.S. Air Force U-2 Pilot. Should be very interesting. If anyone knows of potential speakers, please let your executive board know. It's a busy and time-consuming job looking for speakers for our meetings. March is open for a speaker. Also, in March our Chapter has been in the Villages St. Patrick's Day Parade with our Airborne decorated Golf Carts. It's a fun time so take the family out for lunch and watch the parade. April will be our Annual Airborne Picnic at the Man Cave and May is usually our luncheon in Ocala. If anyone has a suggestion for the May luncheon, please speak up. Otherwise, you'll just have to listen to me.



Also, we voted on the motion to have meetings during the summer months of June, July, and August and the vote was 5 for summer meetings and 10 against summer meetings, so it's business as usual with a hiatus for the summer months (Jun, Jul, Aug) for the chapter. Speaking of summer months, the 82nd Airborne Convention is 13-17 August at the Rosen Centre in Orlando. We've been asked to lend a hand to the Tampa Chapter who is hosting it. Also, it's with a sad heart that I tell you that Henry Thorpe the Tampa Chapter's Chairman passed away suddenly a few weeks ago. If you remember he came up to our chapter about a year ago visiting and briefing us on what their chapter was up to. He'll be missed, but as paratroopers we continue to drive on. Airborne!

I'd love to see more participation at our monthly meetings. Try to dedicate 2-3 hours a month to meeting with your fellow chapter members. I always look forward to the meetings and the fellowship and of course the lunch.

Finally, I'm pleased to announce that we have a new Vice Chairman, Gary Blasczienski. Please welcome him with open arms. Hope to see you on the manifest for the February meeting.

*Tony Alger*, Chairman, North Central Florida All-Airborne Chapter

### *10 Most Recent Canopy Boosters - Thank you for your support!*

#### **Galen Mitchell**

Heath Davenport

Nick Harty

Darla & Jay Tatman

Howard Northrup

Jerry & Robby Brust

Frank Dochniak

Regis Rossa

Marianne & George Zablocki

Arthur Tate



## The All Airborne Battalion

by Ron Dahlgren



Photo by Darren Cinatl

The All Airborne Battalion is a round-canopy jump team based in Texas with a clear mission. As listed on their website ([www.allairbornebattalion.com](http://www.allairbornebattalion.com)), their four key operations are:

1. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness and Recovery Retreats;
2. Educational outreach initiatives and the execution of historical tours, briefs and digital broadcasts;
3. Veteran and First Responder support events around the United States;
4. The execution of both static line and free-fall airborne operations at training events, air events and air shows showcasing the airborne capability to people from all over the world.

The focus on PTSD awareness and recovery is a differentiator from other jump teams.

The Canopy was fortunate to speak with Darren M. Cinatl, President of The All Airborne Battalion, about the organization and his own journey.

Darren has been doing static line jumps as a civilian since 2016. The founders of this group came from some other jump teams and included active duty paratroopers. The team focuses on static line operations over free-fall due to the unique nature of static line jumps. Static line operations better showcase the legacy systems in use - both aircraft and parachutes - as the jump height is low enough to see the entire process. These demonstrations help to build interest in the history of the airborne.

The founders of the All Airborne Battalion were all board members on other jump teams. They wanted to adapt and have flexibility with the goals of the organization. There is a lot of World War Two focus within the community. The All Airborne Battalion highlights this starting at their group insignia. The parachute wings are C-47 wings, referencing the airplane used to deliver our paratroopers during World War Two. The groups parachutes don't look like a T-5 or a T-7, but the majority have been honoring World War Two. Darren points out that the WW2 generation pioneered paratrooper operations, they later taught the Vietnam era troopers who in turn taught the Cold War era troops, on through to today. With other groups hesitant to leave the WW2 focus, the All Airborne Battalion intends to also highlight paratrooper techniques and equipment from the Vietnam, Cold War, and Dominican Republic eras. Darren also points out the distinct lines of effort of his organization which puts PTSD awareness, education, and first responder support events ahead of the actual execution of jumps. This focus allows the organization to serve the community more than anything else. They might cook for vets or incorporate them into their ops. They might talk to a school or provide a static display of equipment at an event. The jumps are to help facilitate the other three lines of effort.

Inspiring the younger generation can make a big impact. In a recent operation in Culpepper, the team set up World War Two equipment alongside modern equipment (RA-1, T-10/11s) provided by the local recruiting team.

*"Even the smallest engagement can change someone's trajectory" - Darren Cinatl*

In 2024, the All Airborne Battalion will be guiding tours of Peleliu, visiting Tarawa, and visiting other atolls and islands from the Pacific theater. The group hopes to eventually reach Vietnam. During the D-Day 80 activities, the group will be in the European Theater of Operations conducting demonstrations and engaging with the public. They will be hosting a jump school at Camp Toccoa, Georgia over the summer. Darren describes this as "taking jump school back to where it started".

Darren has a special sense for history and ceremony. During active duty, Darren accumulated 155 parachute drops. For his centurion jump, he was able to get a very special jump. Originally hoping to jump into Normandy for his 100th, he instead was able to jump into the Netherlands and earn French jump wings in the process. When he was awarded his master parachutist badge, Darren had them pinned on June 6th at the Iron Mike statue in Normandy. He then buried his senior wings at the base of the statue. When he last checked, they were still buried and rusting there.

The team has another super power - pathfinders. Darren and other members are graduates of the US Army Pathfinder School and put their training to use. Although the organization has jumped established drop zones including those at Ft. Moore and Ft. Liberty, they also scout their own drop zones.

They start with map recon, then a group will go to identified possibilities and scout it out. On a recent trip, Darren ran Currahee Mountain and went to look at the hills surrounding the area in Stevens and Franklin County to find a drop zone. When a suitable location was found, the organization leadership met with the landowner to ask for permission. Darren has found talking in person is always better than just a phone call when asking to use an area as a drop zone. The All Airborne Battalion has jumped airports and airfields. This is the primary mission for military paratroopers. When scouting dropzones, team pathfinders make sure the dimensions meet the standards and identify hazards. In one case, an airfield had live crops adjacent. The team was briefed to avoid the field, but as anyone who has jumped a semi-steerable canopy knows, avoiding an obstacle is as much luck as it is skill.

Members of the team jump their own equipment. The team is looking to add "team equipment" that can be used or rented out as needed.

Unfortunately, main and reserve parachute prices have increased dramatically in the last decade. A set of equipment that might have cost \$700 ten years ago might now cost more than \$7000. This obstacle to entry is one reason the team wants to have team equipment. With team equipment, junior enlisted soldiers could jump with the team on an all-expenses paid trip.

While the team performs jumps as demonstrations to the public, they do not perform night jumps or jumps using combat equipment. Both of these conditions increase the risk of injury to the jump and as Darren points out several times, he will never sacrifice safety for the sake of cool. Additionally, in the case of night jumps, an audience would have a hard time seeing the operation. Darren enumerates the risks and challenges including aircraft visual flight rule changes, the lack of a towed parachutist recovery system, and lack of expertise in performing a jumpmaster personnel inspection on exotic historical equipment like leg bags.



Photo by Daren Cinatl

The team follows guidance from Training Circular TC 3-21.220, Static Line Parachuting Techniques and Training, as well as the Common Army Airborne Standing Operating Procedures (CAASOP) in all of their airborne activities.

Veteran paratroopers are invited to jump with the team as strap hangers three times before being required to join the team officially. A jumper cannot earn the team's wings as a strap hanger, but only as an official member. The team also encourages spouses and others that are not-jumpers to join as "friends of the 507th". They will be allowed to join in the non-airborne events conducted by the All Airborne Battalion.

To learn more about the team, visit them online at [www.allairbornebattalion.com](http://www.allairbornebattalion.com) and find them on social media under the same name. The team will be publishing a podcast titled "Under the Canopy" covering everything from the philosophical to the tactical.

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*In addition to being the President and a founding member of the All Airborne Battalion, Darren Cinatl serves as a national director with the 82nd Airborne Division Association and Vice-President of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association.*



Iron Mike, with Darren's wings planted underneath.  
Photo by Cpl Danielle Rodrigues

## From The Chapter

**VFW Post 8083, Saturday January 13th:** The chapter met at the usual location. The chairman had coordinated a guest speaker, Thomas "Buck" Buchanan, a retired Air Force officer and avid bagpiper. Buck provided us with information on the traditional Scottish kit he was wearing, then went on to describe the particulars of a set of bagpipes. He pointed out the convenience of modern materials as his set of pipes were made using a Gore-Tex rather than animal materials. He described the sound a set of pipes makes when the "drones", the long upright pipes, need to be adjusted to be in tune. The portion that is played, the melody pipe, is known as the chanter. Following the orientation to his gear, Buck played a number of tunes beginning with the Army song. The chairman called us to attention as the song started, encouraging the assembly to sing the lyrics. After a few more demonstration songs, Tony presented a certificate of appreciation on behalf of the chapter to Buck.

Following the departure of our guest speaker, the chapter got down to business. A motion was made to investigate the use of certificates of deposit or other instruments to maximize the interest rate on our chapter's savings account.



**Top:** Guest speaker shows his animal-skin pouch. Photo by Tony Alger.



**Left:** The chapter presents a certificate of appreciation to our guest speaker for educating and entertaining the members. Photo by Ron Dahlgren.

**Bottom:** The guest speaker in full-kit, ready to make some music. Photo by Ron Dahlgren.



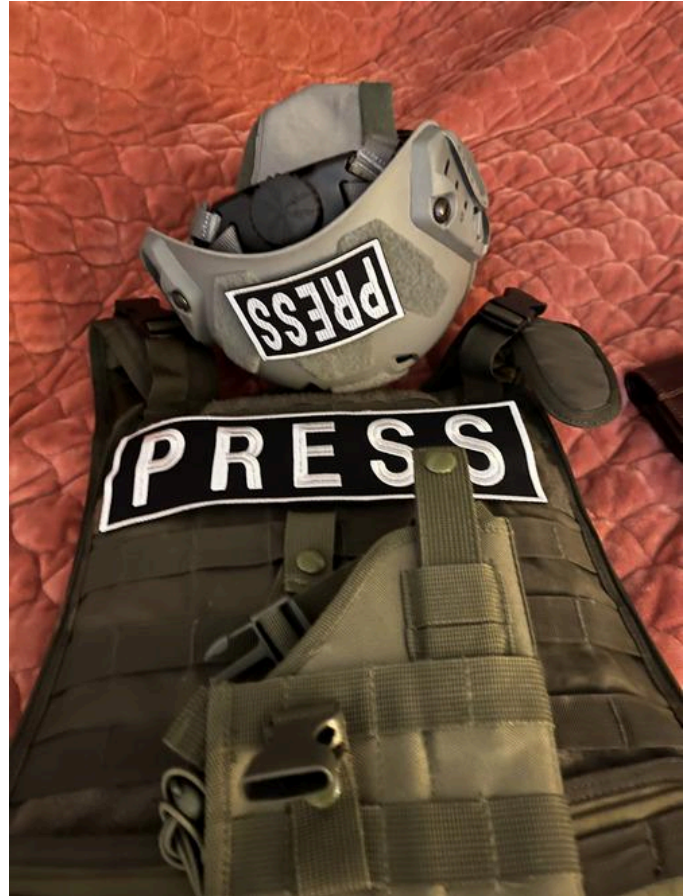


A vote was made by secret ballot to decide if the chapter should meet over the summer months. It has historically been the case that meetings are not held for the months of June, July, and August, as many members are out of state during this time. The results of the ballot had the "no meetings" group win by a factor of two to one.

Next, Tony made another passionate plea to the members for someone to take the responsibility of Vice-Chairman. Out of this plea, a voice arose. A hand was raised. Gary Blasczienski, one of our newest members, had volunteered for the position.

Gary agreed to take on the duties of Vice Chairman after getting some hints as to the responsibilities. Nobody told him about the requirement to change all NCFAAC members' oil on request. We are trying to slip that one past him.

During the meeting, I gave some clues about an upcoming story. As another clue, the kit in the picture to the right will be required for this reporting assignment.



Your editor's kit for an upcoming story. Photo by Ron Dahlgren.



The assembled members. Photo by Ron Dahlgren.

## Staff Sergeant (Ret.) Gary Blasczienski

**Gary recently accepted** the responsibilities of Vice Chairman to the North Central Florida All-Airborne Chapter of the 82nd Airborne Division Association. Back in 1990, he was a hair's width from joining the Marine Corps. Fresh out of high school, a young Gary was intent in signing up to be a Marine. The recruiter rubbed him the wrong way and postponed his enlistment for six years.

When his younger brother decided to join the Army, Gary decided to go along with him. His family had some history with the service - his father served in Vietnam, his grandfather in World War Two. At 24, in 1996, he was older than most of the other recruits.

After his initial entry training, Gary volunteered to the 82nd Airborne Division. He would spend the next seven and a half years there. During the years prior to September 11th, 2001, Gary was looking to become an emergency medical technician (EMT). When the events of 9/11 happened, he was in EMT school. After the attacks, the 82nd Airborne Division would see its operational tempo skyrocket.

In the early days of the Global War on Terror, the 82nd's Division service and support staff were organized into the Soldier Support Battalion. Gary deployed with the SSB as a separate element with the second rotation into Afghanistan. While there, the maneuver battalion and brigade S1 staff would send all their information through him. This included promotions, pay adjustments, and any other personnel actions.

Gary left Afghanistan in December of 2002. He would only spend forty-two days stateside before finding himself in Kuwait on Valentine's Day 2003, preparing to invade Iraq. Gary rode with the initial force crossing the border on March 20th, 2003. Following the Iraq deployment, Gary's time with the 82nd would end. Gary's branch manager told him he came up on orders to go to 7th group. Unfortunately, he meant the 7th Transportation Group.

Fort Eustis, Virginia, is known to most as a TRADOC post.

*"A TRADOC post with one FORSCOM unit on the base, a transpo unit. I found it"*

Gary spent three years in a boat unit for the United States Army. A bizarre but little known fact is that the Army has more boats than the Navy. The key distinction being between ships and boats.

Most of the boats were landing craft - to delivery HMMWVs for instance. His unit had 40-50 boats in it.

After these three years, his next stop was Korea working in the GI. His base was surrounded by mountains, with an 18% incline on the run route.

*"The flat 2-mile PT test was easy by comparison"*

After the year in Korea, Gary was tapped to be a recruiter. When he received these orders there was a big push to get recruiters. The school was over capacity, so he had to take night classes. After completing the school, he was unable to get to his recruiting station within a year and was required to attend the recruiting school a second time.

Photo provided by Gary Blasczienski



Now a thoroughly schooled recruiter, Gary was assigned to the battalion he requested. They were based in the Rochester area of New York - not far from his hometown of Fulton, New York. Gary turned this posting into a unique experience by networking with the local morning radio crew. Gary would appear as a guest three days a week with the "morning zoo". This relationship led him to meet many interesting people, including Taylor Swift.

During the period Gary was recruiting, the Army had difficult rules on who was and was not allowed to enlist. As an example, he could not put someone in with a GED, but if someone had no education, they could join and get a GED through the Army. They once increased the age limit so much that Gary was able to enlist a father and son together. They went to basic training together. Gary says the duo would call and check in with him now and then during their enlistment.

Gary completed three years as a recruiter before making the journey back to the regular army. His next assignment was with 4th BCT (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division in Alaska. He was assigned to the SI shop, but only had six weeks to acclimate before heading back to Afghanistan.

After the whirlwind arrival and deployment, Gary headed back to Ft. Eustis. This time he dodged the boats and was assigned to the Aviation AIT unit for helicopter repair. He spent two years there before retiring.

The first meeting for the 82nd Airborne Division Association Gary ever attended as a civilian was with the North Central Florida All-Airborne Chapter.

*Airborne! All the way! Great to know you, Gary!*

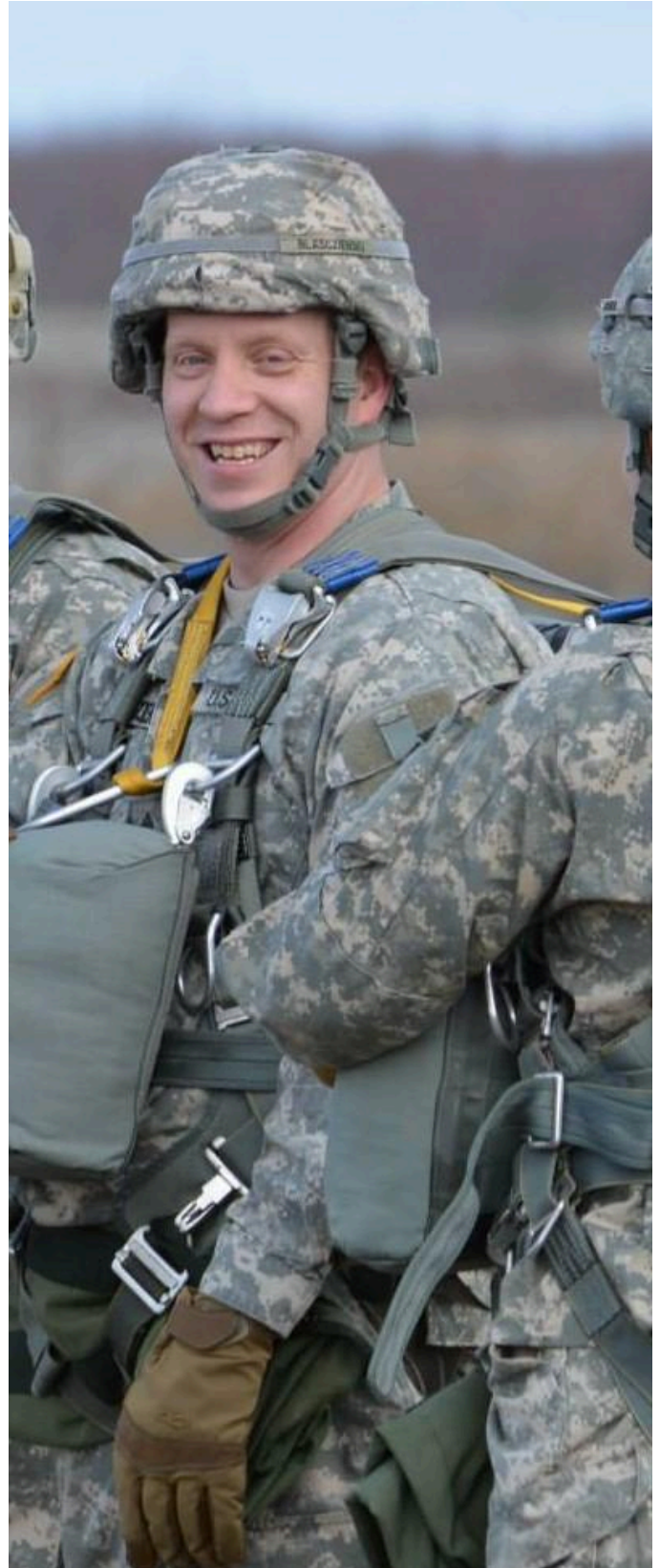


Photo provided by Gary Blasczienski

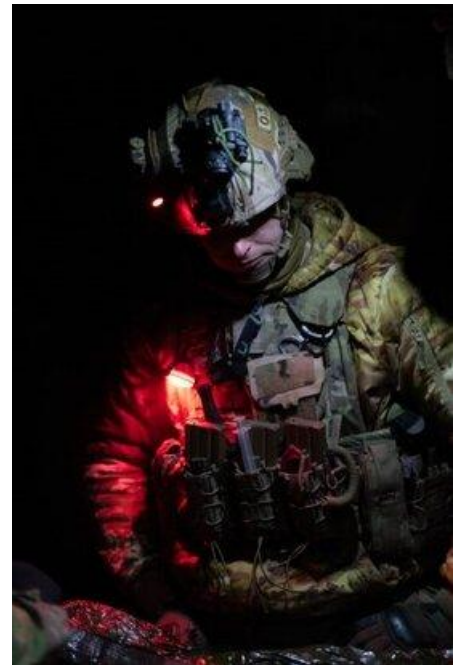


## 82nd Airborne's DIVARTY Training

Loyalty Battalion conducts medical exercise; Gun Devils jump in to start the Devil Field Training Exercise

**Ft. Liberty, NC** - HHB 1-319<sup>th</sup> Airborne Field Artillery Regiment Medics conducted a comprehensive field medical exercise beginning with tactical combat casualty care (TCCC) with the scenario developing into delayed evacuation care management (DECM) and prolonged field care (PFC). The purpose of the training was to develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) at the medical platoon level as the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, and the US Army have moved from counter insurgency (COIN) operations to near-peer large-scale combat operations (LSCO) where immediate evacuation of severe trauma patients most likely will be unavailable. HHB 1-319<sup>th</sup> AFAR Combat Medics and Combat Paramedics executed advanced surgical skills, telemedicine, Role 1 operations, and patient care IAW prolonged field care and nursing care clinical practical guidelines under the guidance of both BN and DIVARTY medical leadership.

Photos by Staff Sgt Julius Harris and Spc Jazmin Cameron, story from ILT Grant Lemen





Photos by Staff Sgt Julius Harris and Spc Jazmin Cameron



**Sicily Drop Zone, Ft. Liberty, NC -**

The 3-319 Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, aka the Gun Devils, dropped into Sicily DZ to kick off the Devil brigade life fire exercises the week of January 22nd, 2024. M119A3 Howitzer cannons, HMMWVs, and gear were heavy-dropped in before the troops jumped out to join. They conducted drop zone procedures to support large scale ground operations. Nothing burned in.

Photos by SPC Jazmin Cameron, HHC 319th AFAR



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