



The Canopy

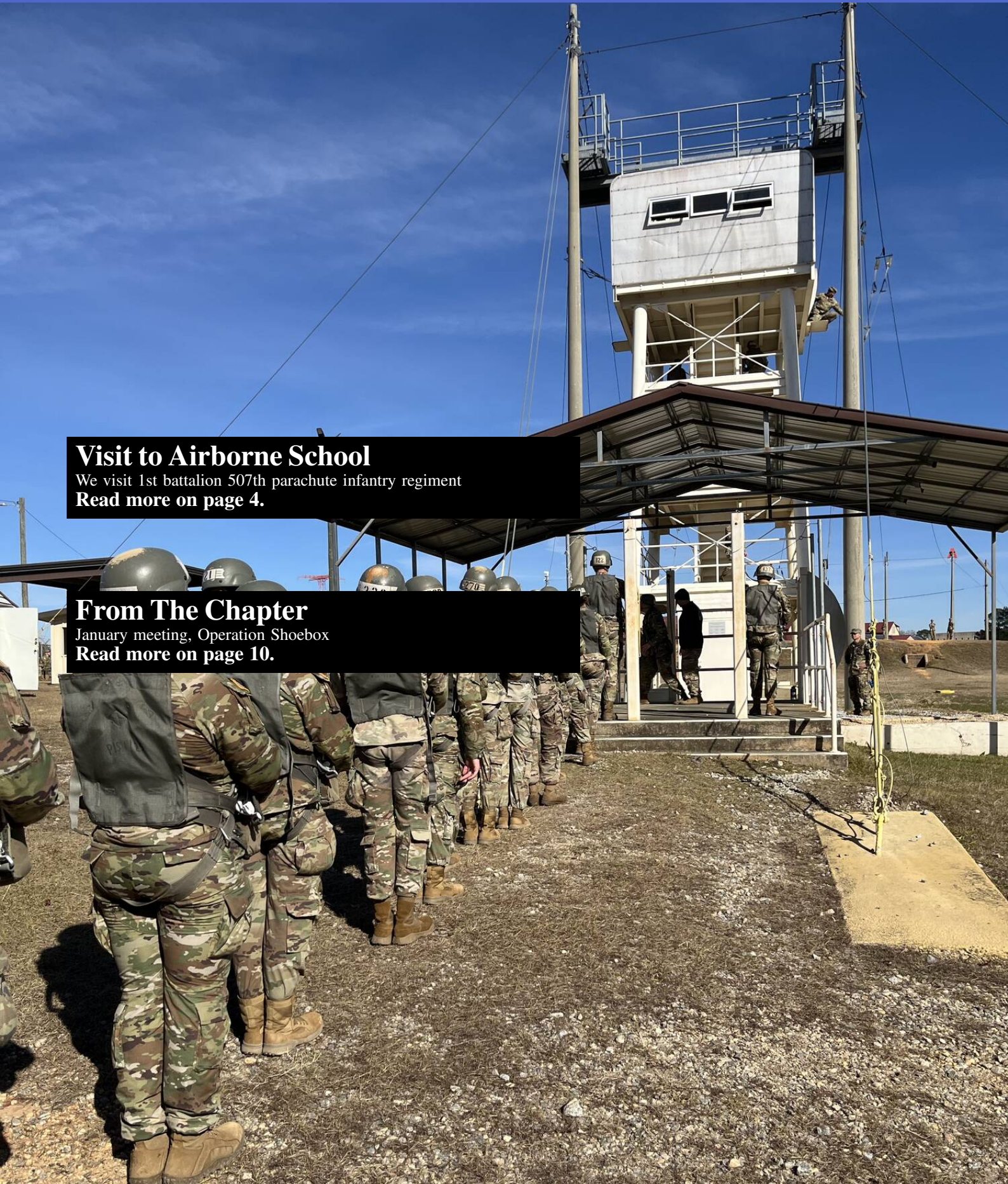
Issue 2 / Volume 33 / February 2025

Visit to Airborne School

We visit 1st battalion 507th parachute infantry regiment
Read more on page 4.

From The Chapter

January meeting, Operation Shoebox
Read more on page 10.



Chapter Officers

Position	Name
Chairman	Tony Alger
Vice Chairman	Gary Blasczienski
Treasurer	Heath Davenport
Secretary	Stephen Fern
Service Officer	Joyce Damon
Recruiting / Villages	Tony Alger
Recruiting / Ocala	Tig Blackman
Canopy Editor	Ron Dahlgren

Upcoming Events and Historical Notes

All Month	All American Week registration	http://82.sw.gy/aaw
February 8th, 1300 hrs	February Chapter Meeting	VFW Post 8083
February 14th	Valentine's Day	In your heart
February 16th	80 years since Operation Topside	Corregidor Island, Philippines

From the Editor



This month features a slightly updated format for The Canopy. As I have more hours in the editor seat, I can mature the publication process and refine the format. The visit to the US Army Airborne School this month was an unexpected treat. I had a few hours to kill at Ft. Moore and thought I'd step over to the school. What a surprise!

Airborne! All The Way!

Ron Dahlgren

Editor, The Canopy

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

Our 2025 Booster Goal is \$500



Start

50%

Complete!

Chairman's Message

Last month's meeting was very interesting because we had representatives from the Phantom Airborne Brigade talk to our chapter about their organization and the upcoming water jump into Lake Dora on the Tavares side of the lake. A few of us were really interested in making the water jump in May. I'm hoping our chapter will support this endeavor since three of us are definitely making the jump May 10 (2nd Sat of the month). Myself, Hope Alger, and Chris Fyfe are on the manifest to exit a C-47 over Lake Dora. Instead of our last meeting before the summer hiatus, I'd like to propose we have our meeting at Wooton Park, Lake Dora in Tavares, FL. We'll have some time to discuss it.

The next meeting I've got the President of the Vietnam Helicopter Association of Florida coming to speak to us about his experiences as an Army aviator. Ken and Linda Hall let me know of him and heard him talk at another function so I was able to get him to speak to us. We have a couple 3-4 chopper pilots in the Chapter. Should be very interesting. If anyone knows of potential speakers please let your executive board know.

February 14 is Valentines Day so Flowers and Chocolates are in order unless you are on strict orders from the doctor to stay away from such things. February is also Black History month and I'll touch on that subject at the next meeting.

Other Important Events are coming up for our us: March 17 is the St Patrick's day parade, so come out and support your local Leprechaun Troopers at the Spanish Springs Square. More information to follow. April 12 is our Airborne Picnic and May is our last meeting/luncheon. As we come closer to these events, we'll let the membership know specifics. The All-American Week at Ft Liberty (Bragg), NC is scheduled for May. If you want to be a delegate we will pay for you registration to this event. Please see me or the Treasurer. Please try to make an effort to attend this meeting. It's only a couple of hours and only once a month. I hope to see you on the manifest for February 8.

Airborne!

Tony Alger

Chairman

North Central Florida All-Airborne Chapter



10 Most Recent Canopy Boosters – Thank you for your support!

Galen Mitchell
Jerry & Robby Brust
Heath Davenport
Christopher Adams
Nick Hartly

Regis Rossa
Darla & Jay Tatman
John Kinney
Howard Northrup
Arthur Tate

Visit to Airborne School

January 14th - Ft. Moore, GA



Photo of 11th Airborne Division memorial statue outside the 1st 507th battalion headquarters.

Photo by R. Dahlgren

A few weeks ago I was out at Ft. Moore to visit an acquaintance and found myself with a few hours to kill. I thought it would be a good opportunity to visit the US Army Airborne School, as it was just down the street. I had visited Ft. Moore several times over the last year and would see the "AIRBORNE" archways around the area and the 250 foot towers on the horizon. This time, I would visit the school and see what I could see. The first stop is always with the public affairs officer, so I needed to find the battalion headquarters. I had parked across from the Airborne school barracks. It was around noon and trainees were running in ones and twos from one area to the next. They stopped at the pull-up bars when they arrived to knock out the required pull-ups. Behind me, I saw a single story building that could be a battalion headquarters, so I headed over to it. Once inside, I learned this



An AIRBORNE archway.
Photo by R. Dahlgren

was the 199th Infantry Brigade headquarters. The 199th is the unit associated with infantry officer training. The staff duty desk was helpful and pointed me in the right direction. I always wear a 504th PIR crest on my lapel, and the soldier directing me noticed it, saying he used to be with the 504. Always a good conversation starter. I returned to my car and drove around to the parking lot more nearby the building he indicated. The headquarters building is near a set of mock towers (unused today) and has several 11th Airborne Division memorials in front.

Inside, I was greeted by several soldiers speaking in the hallway and a DoD civilian with a large beard. I mentioned I'd like to get around and checkout the airborne school, get some pictures for The Canopy, and see what I can see. I was told the unit public affairs rep was Captain Alcorn, and he would be back in fifteen minutes or so. The DoD civilian took that opportunity to pull me over to his collection of airborne artifacts kept in a small museum within the battalion headquarters.



Historical artifacts kept in the 1st Bn 507th PIR HQ.

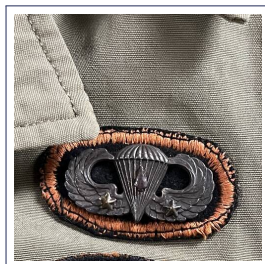
Photo by R. Dahlgren

507th HQ Museum

Sergeant First Class (Retired) Luke Keating was the DoD civilian. He unlocked a set of double doors off a side hallway in the headquarters building revealing an impressive collection of uniforms. I looked around the room and saw a number of interesting things. I asked Luke about what item he was most proud of in the collection. He said there were two - the first was a uniform with a set of distinct wings. These wings had two combat jump insignia and a centered arrowhead! The arrowhead is used as a device on a campaign ribbon to denote a combat jump, helicopter assault, or other such action by a unit. It has never been authorized for wear on jump wings.

The second item Luke wanted to show me was a uniform top that was silk-lined. It was made in-country, during the 11th Airborne Division's time in Japan following the end of WW2. As far as uniform tops go, this would be hard to beat for comfort.

Luke was excited to point out the



Unusual wings. Photo by R. Dahlgren

pocket patch collection. Several uniforms had the pocket patch worn as a shoulder sleeve insignia. Although never authorized, many soldiers did this to proudly note the regiment they had served with. At the time, there were no unit crests worn on the uniforms. As a 504th PIR vet, I can understand wanting to show that I was in the 82nd, but more importantly, I was with the 504! There's a sense of esprit de corps at the regiment level that isn't there at the major command level. Another uniform caught Luke's attention as we were about to leave. He motioned me over to look at the careful hand stitching on the sleeve of a uniform. As with many others, this uniform had a pocket patch worn as a distinctive unit insignia on the sleeve. The stitching was meticulous and flawless.

After looking through the items and getting some stories, Captain Alcorn arrived to meet me. I asked what sort of training I could see today. Charlie Company would be doing their second day of training today - the Mock Tower Individual Exit. He pointed me to the set of towers they would be training on and gave me his contact information if I needed anything.



Silk lined top. Photo by R. Dahlgren



Museum item photos by R. Dahlgren

Training Day 2, Individual Tower Exit

I walk over to find Charlie 1-507th occupying four or more mock towers. There are a lot of trainees out there, roster numbers on their helmets. There are mock doors leading to the 34 foot towers. About half of the trainees are in a harness with a reserve and an empty pack tray. It's a chilly day with an intermittent breeze.

I link up with Staff Sergeant Devries to talk about what the students are up to. This is their second day of the US Army Airborne school program. Their first day covered donning and doffing the harness. Their first day concluded with a briefing about the mock tower individual exit training that would occur today. As I look around the students, I note several have unit patches already. Notably these include the 75th Ranger Regiment scrolls and 82nd Airborne Division patches. An unusual sight. Behind me I hear an excited student yell out, "Woooooo!!!" before starting his count. The students are all counting to six, rather than four. I ask a black hat about this and he tells me that's the amount of time it takes for the new parachutes to fully deploy.



Mock door. Photo by R. Dahlgren

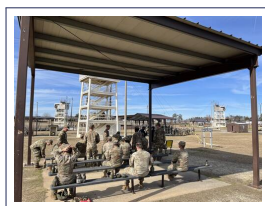
As the students make exits from the 34 foot tower, a black hat sits at a small desk and captures their roster number and notes about their performance. There is a constant stream of students leaving the tower, running back with the riser straps, and running over to the black hat to receive their feedback. As I watch the students exit, I note several weak exits, failure to keep their chin on their chests, and in one case, rapidly bicycling legs. When the students approach for their feedback, it is encouraging and detailed. The black hats are very professional in this regard.



A student exits the tower. Photo by R. Dahlgren

Each student is required to make three satisfactory exits from each side of the tower. Failure to do it right means they do it again. Among the stream of activity going on around each of the four towers is a constant chorus of numbers being yelled. "Two-two-seven-zero!", "One-thousand, two-thousand, three-thousand...", "Bravo one-three-three". The students are counting after exiting the tower, after exiting the mock door, and at several check points along the way they are sounding off with their roster numbers. Between the shouted numbers, the steel cables rattle and squeak with the towers.

I take some time to talk to the students waiting for their turn under the awnings. I find one second generation paratrooper. There are many Option 40 troops hoping to find a place in the 75th Ranger Regiment. Most of the students are excited about their choice to go airborne - none will admit being nervous. Of course, it's only day two.



Students wait their turn. Photo by R. Dahlgren

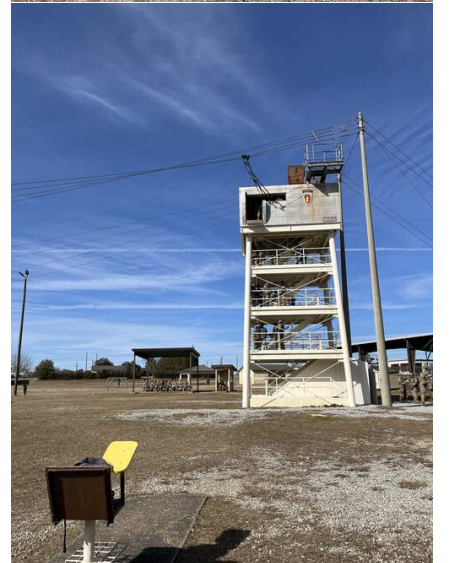
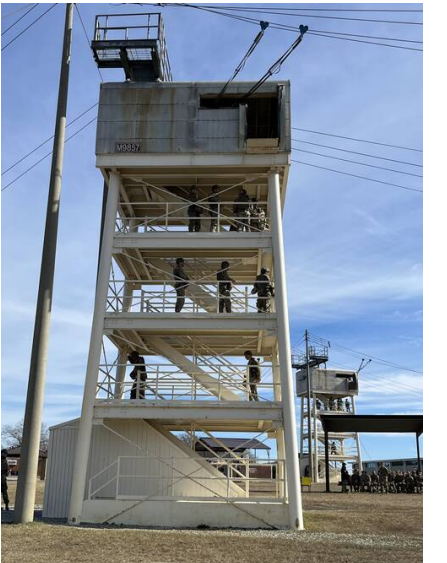
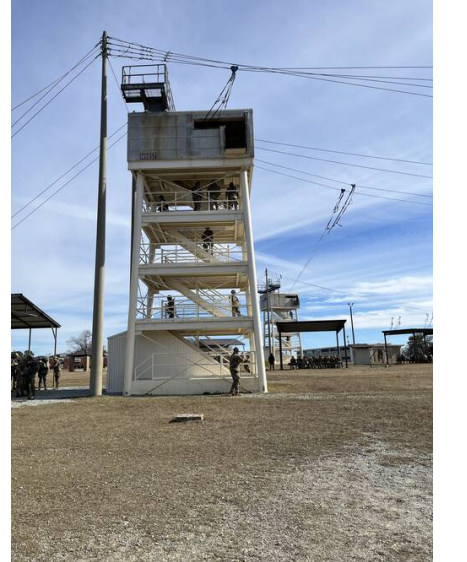
After observing many more exits and talking with black hats not actively engaged in teaching, I spend a few minutes taking in the scene before heading out. I was last in this area almost twenty-five years ago. Many things have stayed the same, a few have changed. The most noteworthy change was the count. After having a four-second count drilled

into me so many times and so many ways, it was odd to hear the six-second version. I wonder how long this parachute takes to deploy from a rotary-winged aircraft...



34 ft. Tower

Photo by R. Dahlgren



C 1-507 PIR training day two photos by R. Dahlgren



C 1-507 PIR training day two photos (cont'd) by R. Dahlgren

From The Chapter

January 24th



Some of the chapter members assembled.

Photo by Gary Blasczienski

The Chapter assembled Saturday, January 11th at 1300 hours. There were 18 members, 3 spouses, and 3 guests present for a total head-count of 24 attendees. At this meeting, the donations for the year were reviewed and approved. Dale Noble, one of our World War II veterans, was recognized for his service. The Charlie Gates Phantom Airborne Brigade was represented and briefed the members on their organization. They are hosting a water jump on May the 10th. The members had several questions about the details related to this upcoming jump. Members interested in viewing or performing the jump should visit <https://phantomairborne.org> to learn more.



Photo by Gary Blasczienski.

Operation Shoebox Donation

Our annual donation to Operation Shoebox was hand-delivered by Chairman Tony Alger to the OSB treasurer, Bonnie White. Operation Shoebox is an organization that focuses on sending thoughtful care packages to forward deployed troops. You can learn more from their website at <https://operationshoebox.com>.



Photo by Tony Alger.

Remembering Don Hearn

Lifetime Chapter member, Don Hearn, passed away in December of 2024. His obituary is reproduced here.

Donald W. Hearn, 84, of The Villages, Florida, formerly of Georgetown, DE, passed away peacefully on December 13, 2024, at home under the loving care of his wife, Lorna (Varell) and Compassionate Care Hospice.

He was born in Salisbury, Maryland on August 7, 1940, to John and Pauline (Timmons) Hearn. Don was a graduate of Lewes High School, Lewes, Delaware, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA, and Wilmington University, Georgetown, DE. He served in the United States Army in the 82nd Airborne Division. Professionally, Don served as a psychotherapist, a community health counselor, and finally, for 20 years as a bereavement counselor for Delaware Hospice.



Photo of Don Hearn.

Provided by Tony Alger.

Support The Canopy

I run The Canopy out-of-pocket. Your booster donations help to cover expenses related to reporting and publication. Your \$25 covers a month of website hosting, or a half-tank of gas, or a day's worth of meals on the road, or 20% of a hotel stay. Please consider sending a donation to:

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