

The Canopy

Issue 1 / Volume 34 / Feb 2026



Remembering Frank Rasbury

Charter member, sharp wit, and a steady hand on the bylaws.

[Read more on page 5.](#)

Splash Manifest

From the chapter: Phantom Airborne water jumps and new officers.

[Read more on page 7.](#)

Green Light

A short history of the signal that turns fear into motion.

[Read more on page 9.](#)

Chapter Officers

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

Upcoming Events and Historical Notes

February 14 @ 1300 hrs	Chapter Meeting & V-Day	VFW Post 8083
March 14 @ 1300 hrs	Chapter Meeting	VFW Post 8083
March 17	St. Patrick's Day Parade	Spanish Springs
March 28	VFW MC Fund Raiser	(See VFW details)
April 5	Easter	The World Over
April 11 @ 1300 hrs	Chapter Meeting	VFW Post 8083

From the Editor

February always feels like the month where the calendar stops being a novelty and starts being a promise. The holidays are behind us, the weather is doing whatever Florida calls “winter,” and the chapter settles back into the rhythm that matters. This month’s cover photo is by Sgt. Austin Robertson, XVIII Airborne Corps Public Affairs.

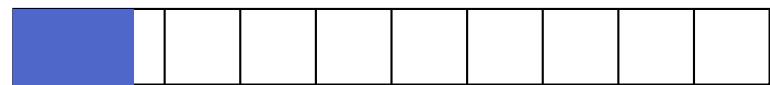


This issue is anchored by the legacy of our charter member, Frank Rasbury. Frank passed away on July 24 at the age of 97, in Ocala. On a personal note, he was a sharp wit, a keen observer of the bylaws, and a beloved presence at our chapter events. If you ever watched him listen to a discussion, you know the look: half amused, half assessing, and fully prepared to quote a line of chapter procedure from memory at exactly the moment it mattered. He would always lead us in a rendition of Blood on the Risers. See you on the final drop zone, Frank.

Airborne! All The Way!

Ron Dahlgren
Editor, The Canopy
<https://www.the-canopy.org>

Our 2026 Booster Goal is \$500



Start

50%

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Chairman's Message

First, I want to thank all of our Paratroopers for welcoming me as the new Chairman. Airborne! Last month we had an amazing turnout to our Christmas Celebration and I want to thank everyone who attended. Additionally, we could not have had such success without the additional attention and effort given by so many. Again the Belleview VFW Post 8083 provided an incredible meal. A special thanks to Hope, Linda and Joyce for providing such support during the party and each and every meeting we have.

For those who are interested in the Water Jump being hosted by the Phantom Airborne Brigade, we already have Paratroopers signed up on standby. It is not too late to get yourself added to the standby roster as well. This jump will take place on May 16th and will be in Lake Dora. It's a great time, even if you are not going to jump, come out and enjoy the event.

A new year has begun and for many it is a time for change. New Year's brings with it a time for resolutions. I hope that those of you who have made resolutions are still engaging with them. Most resolutions do not survive the month of January, but even if you have faltered, you can always start again. Let each month renew you and start again. Let your resolution be a goal and not a life changing event. Plan and adjust as you need and move forward.

We are always moving forward and anything we can do to improve ourselves is a welcome step. Remember that just bringing more joy into your life is an improvement. We as an organization, I believe, have brought joy to many in the community with the events we participate in and donations we make. Take pride in all that we do, we make a difference.

We only have four meetings left before our summer hiatus. If you can make the upcoming meetings then I look forward to seeing you there. I would like to just give everyone a reminder that the Chapter Picnic will be taking place April 12th. Although St. Patrick's Day is still a little ways off, remember if you are going to participate in the parade, you need to plan early.

There is still one person that I would like to thank this month. Tony Alger has been the Chairman since I joined the NCFAAC and has done a wonderful job. I would not have felt comfortable taking up this role if I didn't know he would be here to lean on as I move forward. Tony has not stopped in his dedication to us, taking up the newly created title of Events Coordinator. Thank you again, Tony!

I am looking forward to 2026 with all of you!

Airborne!

Gary Blasczinski

Chairman

North Central Florida All-Airborne Chapter



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

Galen Mitchell

John Kinney

Thurston Helmes

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Heath Davenport

Christopher Adams

Nick Harty

Regis Rossa

Darla & Jay Tatman

Remembering Charter Member Frank Rasbury

July 24th



Frank Rasbury at the chapter 30th anniversary.

Photo by R. Dahlgren

Frank Rasbury passed away on July 24, at the age of 97, in Ocala. For our chapter that sentence lands like a heavy ruck. Not because we didn't know time was doing what time does, but because Frank was one of those people who felt permanent. He wasn't loud about it. He didn't have to be. He was simply *there*: at meetings, at events, in conversations where a chapter becomes something more than a roster and a bank account.

Frank was a charter member. That phrase can sound ceremo-

nial, like a line on a certificate. In practice, it means he helped set the tone that the rest of us inherited. A chapter with charter members who care becomes a chapter that lasts. A chapter without them becomes a social club that eventually forgets why it exists.

If you read the Ocala Gazette's profile, you'll see the headline version of Frank: a lifetime of service, a man who kept stepping forward in the ways that mattered.¹ We all know the headline

¹<https://www.ocalagazette.com/a-lifetime-of-service/>

version is never the whole story. What I want to capture here is the Frank that many of us knew: the sharp wit, the keen eye, and the way he could care deeply about a thing without ever making a show of it.

Frank had the kind of humor that didn't require permission. It wasn't mean. It wasn't performative. It was the humor of a man who had seen enough to tell the truth plainly and still keep you laughing. Frank could puncture nonsense with one sentence. He could also make a new member feel like they'd been in the chapter for years with a single, well-timed comment and a grin.

He was a keen observer of the bylaws. If you never worked through a meeting where a small procedural question suddenly mattered, you might not appreciate what that means. Frank did. He understood that the bylaws aren't there to be a barrier. They're there to protect continuity, fairness, and clarity when personalities collide or when memory gets foggy. Frank cared about the process because he cared about the people the process served.

There's an Airborne way of doing things that lives below the level of official instruction. It's not in the safety brief. It's the shared expectation that we will do it right, even when nobody is watching, even when it's inconvenient, even when it would be easier to let it slide. Frank carried that expectation into chapter life. He wasn't interested in drama. He was interested in standards.

Frank was also, simply, a beloved presence. You could feel the chapter settle when he walked in. Not because he was there to police the room, but because he was part of the chapter's emotional architecture. He was one of the beams holding up the roof. The kind of member who turns a monthly meeting

into something you look forward to.

We say "Airborne" in a lot of contexts. Sometimes it's a greeting. Sometimes it's a punchline. Sometimes it's a way of keeping ourselves brave when we're not feeling brave. With Frank, "Airborne" was also a kind of lifelong posture: show up, stay engaged, hold the line on what matters, and keep your humor intact while you do it.

There's an unavoidable truth about charter members: when you lose them, you don't just lose a person. You lose a piece of origin. You lose a living memory of why certain traditions started, how certain decisions were made, and what the chapter was like before the rest of us arrived. But that loss carries a duty.

Our duty is not to preserve Frank in amber. It's to carry forward the parts of him that made the chapter better: the insistence on doing things properly, the ability to laugh, and the habit of showing up.

If you're a newer member, here's the simplest way to honor Frank Rasbury: come to the meeting. Volunteer for a small task. Learn somebody's name. Bring a buddy. Ask another member about their first jump. Listen more than you talk. And when the chapter drifts toward "good enough," be the person who gently brings it back toward "right."

If you knew Frank personally, you already have your own mental snapshots: the comments under his breath, the raised eyebrow when a motion got sloppy, the warmth when someone needed it. Keep those. Tell those stories. That's how a chapter stays alive across generations.

Rest easy, Frank. See you on the final dropzone.

From the Chapter: Splash Manifest

February 2026



2025 Water jump with the phantom airborne brigade.

Photo by chapter member / Phantom Airborne event

There's a phase every chapter goes through where a perfectly reasonable idea shows up and then refuses to leave. You see it in the conversations before the meeting, in the texts afterward, and in the way grown men start checking weather apps like they're planning D-Day.

For us, that phase has a name: **Phantom Airborne Brigade water jumps**.

At some point in the last year, we collectively discovered that the only thing more fun than exiting an aircraft is exiting an aircraft *and then landing in a lake*. It's airborne, it's absurd, it's oddly graceful from a distance, and it has produced more post-jump laughter than anything we've done in recent memory.

The pitch is simple. The reality is not.

A water jump is one of those events that looks like a novelty until you're the one standing in the door thinking, "This is a completely normal thing for an adult to do on purpose." The canopy opens, the view is beautiful, and then your brain catches up and remembers you are about to land in something that is actively trying to get into your boots.

It's also become a chapter glue event. Even members who aren't jumping show up to watch, to help, to heckle lightly (with love), and to take pictures we'll pretend we don't care about until we see them later.

What's the obsession really about? It's not just adrenaline. It's the ritual. The planning. The shared anticipation. The fact

that a jump gives you a hard reset: the usual worries get put on hold because the sequence takes over. Hook up, check equipment, look out, commit. The water is just the punchline at the end.

New officers on the line

This month also marks a leadership transition, and it's worth saying plainly: chapters don't run themselves. Somebody has to do the coordinating, the paperwork, the phone calls, and the behind-the-scenes labor that makes the fun stuff possible.

Chairman: Gary Blascienski. Gary is stepping into the chairman role with the kind of energy that suggests he's either very motivated or has not yet been properly introduced to the joys of scheduling conflicts. In all seriousness: Gary has been consistently involved, consistently steady, and consistently willing to take responsibility. That's what the position needs.

Vice Chairman: Stephen Fern. Stephen is taking the vice chairman slot, and anyone who has watched him work already knows what that means: follow-through. He's the guy who not only says, "We should do that," but also shows up with the plan and the checklist.

Events Officer: Tony Alger. Tony has accepted the role that makes or breaks a chapter's momentum: events. This is where intentions turn into dates on the calendar, where ideas become

reservations, and where somebody has to remember that a good time still needs a headcount. Tony has already been a driving force behind making things happen; now we're just admitting it in the official paperwork.

If you're reading this and thinking, "That sounds like a lot of work," you're right. The correct response is not sympathy. The correct response is support. Show up. RSVP. Volunteer when asked. And if you have a skill that can help (graphic design, printing, organizing, contacting speakers, setting up chairs, taking photos), raise your hand.

Looking ahead

We've got a solid set of upcoming events on the board, and they're the kind that benefit from simple participation. The meetings matter. The parade is a great public-facing moment. The fund raiser supports the organizations that support us. And yes, somewhere in the background, the water jump conversation continues to grow like it has its own chain of command.

If you haven't come out in a while, February is a good month to fix that. We'll save you a seat. Just don't be surprised if the first question you get is: "So... when are you doing the water jump?"

The Green Light

Airborne Notes



7th SFG troops jumping a German C-130J.

Photo by Sgt. Carolina Sierra

There are a lot of symbols in the airborne world. Wings on a chest. A maroon beret. A scar that turns into a story after the second beer. But the simplest symbol we have might also be the most powerful: a small green light in a loud aircraft.

It doesn't look like much. It's not a flag. It's not a speech. It's not even a particularly impressive piece of equipment. Just a light, wired into an aircraft that's doing aircraft things, turning on at the exact moment when a paratrooper is required to stop thinking and start moving.

The green light is often treated like a punchline. "When it turns green, you go." That's the whole joke. And like most good jokes, it covers something serious.

Before the light

Long before anyone sees green, the sequence starts building pressure.

There's the planning, the manifest, the little frictions that make up a jump day. Somebody's missing a piece of equipment. Somebody's ruck is doing that thing where it looks fine until it doesn't. Somebody is trying to act casual while their stomach negotiates terms.

Then there's the aircraft itself: the vibration, the noise, the sense that you are riding inside a machine that does not care about your feelings.

And there's the strange airborne time distortion: the long wait that feels like it will never end, followed by the sudden realization that it is, in fact, your turn. The door opens. The wind changes. The conversation stops.

That moment is where the green light lives.

What the signal really means

Technically, the green light is a command-and-control tool. It communicates that conditions are set for exit: timing, airspeed, drop zone alignment, and the invisible geometry of safety and separation.

But culturally, the green light means something else.

It means the planning phase is over. It means talking is done. It means the point of no return has arrived, and nobody is going to argue you back into your seat. It means you can't negotiate with the aircraft, the wind, or gravity. The agreement was signed the moment you hooked up.

That's why the light feels heavier than its wattage.

A small history of a big moment

Airborne units have always needed a clear, unmistakable way to control the flow of bodies out of a moving aircraft. Early combat drops relied on timing, hand signals, shouted commands, and

visual cues that were sometimes hard to see and easy to misinterpret inside a roaring fuselage.

Over time, the Army (and other airborne forces) refined the process into standardized commands and unmistakable signals. Lights became part of that language: red to hold, green to go. Simple enough to cut through noise and stress. Clear enough that even a brain running on adrenaline and habit can obey it.

Airborne is full of sophisticated equipment. The green light isn't one of them. That's the point. In the most complex moment, you want something simple.

The green light and the human part

Every paratrooper learns, sooner or later, that fear is not the enemy. Confusion is. Panic is. Hesitation is.

Fear is just the body taking the situation seriously.

The green light doesn't remove fear. It gives it a job. It turns fear into motion by forcing a decision. It's the difference between thinking about the exit and committing to it.

That's why the green light becomes a kind of personal landmark. Years later, you might forget the drop zone name, or the

aircraft tail number, or the day of the week. But many of us can still remember the color inside the aircraft, the texture of the sound, and the instant that light changed.

A chapter note

We're an organization built around shared experience, and shared experience is often built around small, repeatable rituals. In the chapter we don't have a green light. We have something close: the moment you decide to come to the meeting after a long absence. The moment you decide to call another member instead of assuming they're fine. The moment you decide to volunteer instead of waiting for somebody else.

In other words, the moment you stop thinking and start moving.

The green light is a tiny thing, but it's a reminder of a larger truth: the most important signals are often the simplest ones, and the most important actions are often the ones you take immediately after.

When it turns green, you go.

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