



**CHAPTER 1 (SIGHOLTZ CAPITAL CHAPTER)  
173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION  
PO Box 173  
McLean, VA 22101-0173**



## **AFTER ACTION REPORT**

**173d Airborne Brigade Association**

**2018 Reunion**

**Hilton Alexandria Mark Center Hotel**

**Alexandria, VA**

**May 23 to May 27, 2018**

**Hosted by Chapter 1 (Sigholtz Capital Chapter)**

**Submitted by Joe Flesch, President Chapter 1**

**6 August 2018**



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## **Content of this Report**

This after action report for the 2018 173d ABA Reunion contains an Introduction and Background of the Chapter 1 planning process, our 2018 Reunion Committee Sub-Committee Structure and our Lessons Learned. Sub-committee after action details can be found in the five enclosures.

### **Introduction and Background**

During the first quarter of 2015 Chapter 1 was approached to see if we would host the 2018 173d Airborne Brigade Association (173d ABA) in our area. As Chapter President I indicated that until we got at least 15 members to volunteer to work on a reunion committee we could not take on this task.

Having signed up 15 volunteers, we established our 2018 Reunion Committee on 15 August 2015 via teleconference. In our preliminary planning we discussed various venues and events/activities that our area offered. We also established a reunion committee organization for sharing the workload. We agreed to use Ms. Kimberly Hubbard as our Concierge, per guidance from then Association President Roy Scott. Her duties would be to help us select a specific venue and then act in the name of the 173d ABA and the host Chapter in negotiations with the selected venue and sign and monitor our contracts with the selected venue and various transportation companies (Tour Buses). Committee members were provided the After Action Reports and Financial Statements for recent Association reunions. These were obtained on the Association Website.

- Major Planning Milestones
  - Initial Chapter discussion regarding bidding on the 2018 Reunion took place in the first quarter of 2015.
  - Reunion Committee established 15 August 2015.
    - Chapter decisions/considerations regarding the 2018 Reunion process:
    - Chapter would establish a Gantt Project Plan
    - We would hold regular Reunion Committee Meeting via teleconference.



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- We would use the BDE ASSN Website and data base for registration processing and control.
  - Chapter would use the Association financial account with Bank of America and a subaccount was established for the 2018 Reunion.
  - The registration fee for 2018 was set at \$99 per member and guest as directed by past Association President Roy Scott (This Covered Banquet & Hospitality Room access)
  - Per By-Law change the host Chapter gets 67% and ASSN gets 33% split of registration fee revenues)
  - Reunions typically draw 400-600 members and guests – for planning purposes we estimated 800-1000). Our actual count was 804.
  - Chapter also gets rebate for each room night occupied within our room block per contract.
- Ms. Kimberly Hubbard (the 173d ABA Concierge) was contacted and became part of the committee; and she was asked to provide us information on 6 venues within our area. The six locations were Alexandria, VA; Baltimore, MD, Gettysburg, PA; Herndon, VA; Hershey, PA and Williamsburg, VA.
    - In October 2015 Ms. Hubbard provided the committee information on areas of interest in all six venues and recommendations of hotels and convention centers that could accommodate our reunion. Included was the room-night cost for each hotel; this information was provided to each committee member with a matrix and they were asked to rank order each from 1 through 6, with 1 being the best venue and 6 being least attractive venue. There could be no tie votes among the venues.
  - On 19 December 2015 (at our first regular teleconference committee meeting) we selected the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center hotel in Alexandria, VA as our venue for the 2018 173d ABA Reunion.
    - We agreed that Committee meetings would be held via teleconference on Saturday mornings at 9 AM Eastern time since Ms. Hubbard lives in San Diego, CA and volunteered to be available at 6 AM her time.
    - We held a total of 23 reunion committee meets, via teleconference, for the 2018 reunion. The first was the December 2015 meeting, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> were held in July and December of 2016, Meetings 4 through 18 were held monthly from January 2017 through March of 2018. Meetings In April 2018 we held weekly meetings (numbers 19-22). Our last committee meeting (number 23) was conducted



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12 May 2018 to finalize the planning process and ensure transportation and delivery of all items and supplies to the hotel by 21 May to allow set up time and final coordination with the hotel event coordinator.

- January 2016 – Venue Proposal (Alexandria, VA) was briefed at BDE Mid-Winter Conference – Columbus, GA
- Presented draft 2018 Reunion Agenda etc. at 173 ABA General Membership Meeting June 2016 BDE Reunion in Columbus, GA
- Presentation of detailed agenda, etc. at 173d ABA General Membership Meeting in May 2017 BDE Reunion at Oklahoma City

### **2018 Reunion Committee Sub-Committee Structure**

- Registration
- Operations Center
- Finance
- Banquet
- Donations/Sponsorships
- Hospitality Room
- Tours/Trips
- Vendor Activities
- Entertainment
- VIP POC
- Publicity/Publications
- Security/Safety
- Veteran Activities for Participants

Committee members headed each sub-committee. Committee members and other volunteers served on one or more sub-committees and additional volunteers

### **Lessons Learned**

1. Overall Lessons Learned
  - a. Chapters planning to bid to host 173d ABA Reunions need to start their planning and organization at least three years in advance. This will allow them to consider:
    - i. Chapter support – get member commitment (Our decision point was at least 15 members committed to support – at one point we had 27 individuals participating on the committee).



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- ii. Reunion committee organization (see 2018 Reunion Committee Sub-Committee Structure above.
  - iii. Tentative venue
  - iv. Tentative events (tours, local attractions, etc.)
  - v. Prepare a draft briefing for their bid to be presented at the BOD meeting and general membership meeting two years before the reunion they bid on.
  - vi. Begin the design and production process for your Reunion Coin very early. You need insure that your coins are produced and in your possession prior to reunion registration.
- b. Early on we selected the theme for the 2018 Reunion - "Serving Sky Soldiers, Past, Present and Future". We also discussed getting as many GWOT and current Sky Soldiers as possible to participate in the reunion. The young Sky Soldiers are the future of our organization.
- c. The use of teleconferencing for our 2018 Reunion Committee meetings was an efficient way to conduct meetings. As stated above we held a total of 23 committee meetings from December 2015 through May 2018.
- i. We first used Skype for our meetings. The drawback with Skype was that it limits you to 25 participants and if people phone in who do not have a long-distance plan the host gets a per-minute charge for each such call-in. The host therefore has to establish a credit line with Skype.
  - ii. Early in our process I switched to freeconferencecall.com which limits the number of participants to 1,000 worldwide and is actually free unless you use their conference recording capability which is limited to 19 hours per conference.
  - iii. Both Skype and Free Conference Call allow the host to share his screen or switch the screen share to another participant.
  - iv. An agenda, minutes from the previous meeting and a committee roster were provided for each meeting and additional materials were shared as appropriate for each meeting.
  - v. Free Conference Call was also used for several subcommittee meetings as appropriate.
- d. Consider security and safety plans for the venue chosen.
- e. Develop publication and publicity plans.
- f. Develop a draft reunion budget up front
- g. Use resources available on 173d ABA website
- i. After Action Reports from previous reunions.
  - ii. Review Financial Reports from previous reunions.
- h. Work with 173d ABA Executive Committee



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- i. Banquet Guest Speaker candidates
- ii. Ideas for informational/educational presentations (VA Services, Oral History sessions, Wreath Laying, Veterans recognition activities, etc.

**2. Registration & Finance**

- a. Decision to use the 173d ABA Website for registration activities and control worked well. The Chapter is indebted to the 173d ABA Webmaster Jerry Cooper for his assistance and expertise. This saved us from having to develop a standalone registration website.
- b. Use of the 173d ABA Bank of America 2018 Reunion subaccount facilitated tracking and control of registration funds. It also facilitated production of the Financial Report for the 2018 Reunion.
- c. Having the “Shopping Cart” software separate from the 173d ABA “Wild Apricot” software caused us to develop a complex Excel spreadsheet to track individual member detail event registrations. Recommend working with Wild Apricot to see if their Shopping Cart software can be revised to break out detailed individual event selections. Then reports could be run from the website.
- d. Detailed planning for the Registration Process is a key to a successful reunion. Our Registration Team did an outstanding job.
- e. During the registration process make sure to identify Sky Soldiers and guests who have physical disabilities – this is important when planning for hotel accommodations and bus tours.
- f. One negative aspect for us was that we had two vendor tours scheduled for the first day of registration. While we had worked closely with the vendor to track members who signed up for the tours (the chapter provided the tickets for these tours in the welcome packet, etc.). The vendor should have had a knowledgeable representative available to answer specific questions related to their tours. I would recommend not conducting any tours on the first day of registration at the reunion site.
- g. Regarding vendor tours – these can be an asset for a chapter hosting a reunion; however, they should not be executed under the same contract a chapter uses for vendors who contract for the vendor room facilities only. The time and effort required for coordination of vendor tours far exceeds the requirements to provide vendor tables, chairs, etc. in the vendor room.
- h. Close and constant coordination has to be maintained between the host chapter and the hotel event coordinator. We found it very expertise of Ms.



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Kimberly Hubbard (the 173d ABA Concierge) invaluable for the 2018 reunion. I would recommend that the 173d ABA consider formalizing their relationship with her company.

### **3. Operations Center**

- a. Planning for an Operation Center is essential for a smooth execution of a large reunion. We planned for a dedicated phone line that could be forwarded to a cell phone when the Operations Center was closed. This would allow all reunion participants to be able to contact the host chapter if they had serious problems day or night.
- b. Plan for computer and printer use in the Operations Center. Prior to the first day of the reunion ensure that your computers and printers function properly in the Ops Center.
- c. Track and manage office and reunion supplies during the reunion.
- d. Have adequate staffing for the Operations Center to help coordinate a smooth flow of all activities.

### **4. Banquet Planning**

- a. Assign a committee member as the lead on the Banquet.
- b. Consider banquet seating chart and banquet room configuration.
- c. Detailed planning of banquet agenda in close coordination with the 173d ABA Executive Board, the hotel and outside agencies (color guards, quest speakers, VIPs, etc.)
- d. Make sure that there is only one egress into the banquet hall – All other doors should be blocked or roped off and maybe even guarded.

### **5. Donations/Sponsorships**

- a. Donations/Sponsorships are very important. Chapters should develop their Donation/Sponsorship packets very early in their process and get them out to potential donors and sponsors.
- b. Have a plan to recognize donors and sponsors and execute the plan.

### **6. Hospitality Room**

- a. Each State has different laws regarding alcoholic beverages within hotels. Make sure you coordinate early the provision for alcoholic beverages in by the Chapter in your hotel. Therefore we had to pay over \$1,300 for each 15 ½ gallon of beer we used at the reunion.
- b. We also found that Virginia hotel laws also specify that no outside foodstuffs are brought into a hotel in common areas. After much negotiation with the hotel we finally allowed to use our popcorn machine in the hospitality room but were not allowed any other snack items from outside.
- c. If you plan to have entertainment in the hospitality room make sure you contact the group or groups early as you will have to negotiate a contract.



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Also keep your hotel event coordinator in the loop as you will have to electricity and possibly other hotel provided support items (audio visual, etc.)

7. Tours/Trips

- a. You must plan early tours/trips, in order to finalize your calendar of events for the reunion.
- b. You will also have to deal with bus companies to reserve the number of buses you will need for each tour/trip. Plan on having a signed contract and on put a down payment to reserve the requested number of vehicles. Make sure you know their refund policy and also their policy on adding vehicles as the reunion dates draw near.
- c. If you have tours planned that are not free to the public you will have to deal with site to coordinate the purchase of tickets for that site.

8. Vendor Activities

- a. You must coordinate appropriate space for your vendor room.
- b. Recommend you put together a Vendor Packet early in the planning process and distribute it to potential vendors. The hotel will quote you pricing of tables, chairs, waste baskets for the vendor room. If a vendor should do a contract with the host chapter for their space, number of tables etc. If they require specific electrical access you should provide them with a contract from the hotel and the vendor has the responsibility to coordinate that.
- c. We found it best to have one egress into the vendor room. This controlled access and assured securing the vendor room after hours. Note – there were only three keys that would open the Vendor Room and the Operations Center. The hotel staff did not have key access to those two rooms. I had a key, our Chapter vendor sub-committee head had a key and our security chief had a key. One of us had to open those two rooms for the hotel staff to clean them daily.

9. VIP POC

- a. We assigned a POC to deal with VIPs during the reunion.
- b. Duties included coordination the Old Guard support for the Banquet, assisting VIPs attending the President's Reception (Alexandria Mayor, Military Attaché from Australia, Army Attaché from New Zealand, Guest Speaker, etc.

10. Publicity/Publications

- a. Publicity
  - i. We developed a publicity plan to highlight local areas of interest which were published in the Sky Soldier Magazine, there were 15 "Reunion Blasts" transmitted to the entire Association via email.



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- ii. The email blasts contained local information on safety, crime prevention and local areas of interest (museums, art galleries, historic sites, etc.)
  - iii. Provided local media (newspapers, radio & TV) information on the 173d ABA and the 2018 Reunion.
  - iv. Contacted some the businesses we highlighted to see if they would provide discounts for Reunion attendees who showed their registration badge. We should have stressed this with more vigor and provided the information of those willing to give Sky Soldiers a discount to attendees.
- b. Publications
- i. 2018 Reunion Brochure was produced to include in the Registration Welcome bag and highlighted our reunion theme “Serving Sky Soldiers, Past, Present, and Future.”
    - 1. Welcome letters were included from the 173d ABA President, the host Chapter President, the Commander and CSM of the 173d Airborne Brigade, Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine from Virginia, Congressman Don Beyer from Virginias 8<sup>th</sup> District and Mayor Allison Silberberg of Alexandria, Virginia.
    - 2. Bio of the Banquet Guest Speaker Gregg Zoroya
    - 3. Reunion schedule of events and hotel floor plan
    - 4. Information on the Vietnam Veterans National Memorial Tour
    - 5. City and Metro Maps
    - 6. Brigade History and Medal of Honor Recipients
    - 7. Information on the 173d AB National Memorial Foundation and the Sky Soldier Foundation
    - 8. Reunion Donor List
    - 9. Information on the 2019 Reunion
    - 10. Attendee Manifest
    - 11. Sponsor Ads
  - ii. 2018 Banquet Pamphlet Note – Both the 2018 Reunion Brochure and the 2018 Banquet Pamphlet were printed by the company that prints the Sky Soldier Magazine.. Planning for both publications accelerated after the 2018 Mid-Winter Conference.
- c. Signage/Tent Cards
- i. Have a detailed plan for adequate signage for the reunion.
  - ii. Hotels will normally provide signage to direct residents to various venues at the hotel. We were able to work with our Hotel and



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provided them with 2018 Branding Logo examples which they used the signage they produced for us.

- iii. We also had several larger signs printed locally with Branding Logs for specific events or other information (Events Schedule, etc.)
- iv. We also printed our own tent card for the head table at the banquet, the reserved tables at the banquet (all Gold Star family members, Association executive board members & guests not at the head table; and Chapter Union staff workers & guests

#### 11. Security/Safety

- a. Early in our planning the Security sub-committee chair and I met with the hotel director of security. We reviewed their security operation and discussed local threat analysis. We also discussed guest safety protocols.
- b. Our Security Sub-Committee chair subsequently met with local Alexandria Police and Fire officials.
- c. We then prepared a “Reunion Blast” addressing personal safety in the Washington, DC area and distributed it to all Association members.

#### 12. Veteran Activities for Participants

- a. We coordinated with Veterans Affairs to have three VA Services seminars conducted during the reunion. There was miscommunication at the VA regarding the first scheduled seminar and it had to be cancelled. The other seminars took place.
- b. We coordinated with the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center (US AHEC) to conduct Oral History Interviews of Sky Soldiers on the 2d & 3d days of the reunion. They conducted 28 one hour interviews during the reunion. AHEC is willing to conduct oral interviews at any veteran’s reunion/gathering if given advanced notice and included in the event planning process. I highly recommend that they be included in future 173d ABA Reunion activities.
- c. We coordinated with the Vietnam Veterans Commemoration office to get support for our reunion. SSG Walton attended during the first day of the reunion and handed out 50<sup>th</sup> Vietnam War Anniversary Lapel pins to attendees. He provided us with 500 of the lapel pins. He informed me that the 173d ABA could contact them and sign up as Associates which would enable the 173d ABA to then be able to directly order the lapel pins to support future Association events. Recommend that the Association Executive Board apply for Associate status.

#### 13. All Hands on Deck



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- a. Throughout our planning process we canvased our chapter membership for volunteers to assist with the detailed control of the reunion (Bus Captains, workers to help man the hospitality room, vendor room, operations center, etc.)
- b. About two months before the reunion we sent out an “All hands on deck” appeal to chapter member. We had an adequate response and these members and their spouses contributed greatly to success.

Enclosure 1 Registration

Enclosure 2 Finance, Donations and Sponsorships

Enclosure 3 Publicity/Printing

Enclosure 4 Vendor Room

Enclosure 5 Bus Tours

Enclosure 6 – Hospitality Room



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## **Enclosure 1 – Registration**

### **173d ABA 2018 Reunion Registration After Action**

#### **Registration at Hilton Alexandria Mark Center Hotel, Alexandria, VA 2018**

Registration for over 800 people occurred as follows:

Sunday 20 May - before reunion, 5 people arrived and unloaded all supplies

Monday 21 May:

- Remove all plastic from 900 lanyards
- Fill USAA & AAFMAA welcome bags with books, pamphlets, pen, etc. - total 5 hours with all 5 people working.

Tuesday 22 May:

- Open and fill all lanyard with 4 different meal choices
- 8 different tours and event tickets added to lanyards based on individual purchases - 9 hours for 6 people to co-ordinate and distribute all tickets

Wednesday 23 May - 0900 opening of Registration:

- Arrived at 0700 to find approximately 40 people milling about, ready to do registration.
- We opened at 0715 by doing so we never had a backlog of more than 3 people in line.
- 3 tables labeled A-G; H-N; and O-Z (each table had a three ring binder with the appropriate individual registration orders) this worked great; however you need someone who has knowledge of the overall scheme, to work behind the tables to fill in as a registrar becomes tied down looking up information.
- A large book with all up to date info is also needed as a back-up behind the registration tables.
- Someone at the command center needs to be available who is aware of the overall reunion and planning from the beginning and knows all the inside information that is not at the registration tables.



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- At all times any busses or tours have to have a representative nearby to answer questions concerning manifests, tour agenda, meeting places and time schedules to relieve pressure on registration staff. These tour staff should be close to but away from the registration table as it just causes confusion with people standing in line, trying to get tour or bus information.
- Two other people are needed at registration, one to take cash as needed and the other to take credit cards with a PayPal or similar app on their phone.
- A cash box and receipt books are essential.

**Registrations Processed Each Day:**

- Wednesday 23 May - approximately 600 lanyards and welcome bags given out
- Thursday 24 May – 100 lanyards and welcome bags given out
- Friday 25 May – 50 lanyards and welcome bags given out
- Saturday 26 May – 50 lanyards and welcome bags given out.

**Lesson Learned:**

Bus and tour questions slowed down the registration operations as people obviously wanted all questions answered at the registration desk. We knew about the tours and other info, however manifest and meeting places were not available on the first day when most people showed up. A separate table should have been set up close to but not in the exact registration area where people could have been directed to, this would have made it easier for the registration staff.



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## **Enclosure 2 – Finance, Donations and Sponsorships**

### **Initial 2018 Reunion Budget Planning**

In our initial financial planning we adapted the Oklahoma City 2017 Reunion Spreadsheet. This allowed us to begin projecting revenues and expenditures.

- In our early meetings we determined to employ an aggressive program to seek donations and sponsorships from industry, individuals and other Association Chapters.
- We established a Donation Sub-Committee to guide these activities.
- We consulted the Donor/Sponsor Packet developed for the OKC Reunion and made modifications to support our Reunion.
- We coordinated with the 173d ABA the use of the 2018 Reunion Sub-Account in the Association Bank of America (BoA) account.
  - The Chapter 1 President was issued a BoA debit card to be used for reunion expenses.
  - It is important that an adequate daily spending cap be established to ensure its utility. This allows you to deal with Bus companies and the hotel, etc.

### **Fund-Raising Efforts:**

Background: Initial focus was on major corporations. Not successful for a lot of apparent reasons:

- Did not get inside of their “Decision Cycle” because of timing of the Program. Need to start out a year before the next reunion if the focus will be on large companies vice individuals. One company told us that they only review solicitations if they are received during 1-30 June or 1-30 December.
- Relied on “Snail Mail” to distribute solicitations. A very large company indicated that they only acknowledge solicitations if they arrive via interne.

### **Focused on “Band of Brothers” Groups:**



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- WP Classes of 1965 and 1966 that were Sky Soldiers.
- WP Rugby 1963-1965 Team.
- 2/ 503<sup>Bn</sup> that jumped into Iraq.

**Other Sources:**

- 173d ABA Chapters. Sent an email to all 173d ABA Chapter Presidents. We recommended that they make a donation of \$100.00 - \$500.00 (based on their financial situation), to assist the host chapter. We received generous donations from several chapters.
- We added a donation selection to the 2018 Reunion Registration form and this proved to be very beneficial. We received donations from individual from \$1.00 to over \$300.00.
- We recognized all donors and sponsors in our 2018 Reunion Brochure and the Banquet Pamphlet plus on a large display board.

**We produced a Projected Sources and Uses of Funds Spreadsheet.**

- Maintaining this spreadsheet allowed us to efficiently track our revenues and expenditures.
- Key to maintenance of this spreadsheet was the close coordination of the constantly changing revenues from the registration process and the accurate and timely recording of reunion expenditures.

**Use of the 173d ABA BoA 2018 Reunion Sub-Account**

- Using the 2018 Reunion account was very beneficial to our reunion.
- It requires close coordination between the Reunion Chairman and the Association Treasurer.
- The host chapter must be prompt in submitting the required Debit Card Expenditure Forms and the Check Request Forms. Both forms need to be accompanied with the receipts.
- Another plus in using the Association account was being able to produce and submit a final 2018 173d ABA Reunion financial report within weeks of the close of the reunion. The biggest delay in getting the final data was the settlement of the Master Bill with the Hotel.



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## **Enclosure 3 – Publicity/Publications**

### **Publicity**

- Publicity for the Reunion began approximately one year before the Reunion start date. This was an appropriate start timeframe.
  - We began with developing a Reunion Theme: “Serving Sky Soldiers Past, Present, and Future”.
  - We developed a Reunion logo but changed it about six months before the reunion.
  - We designed the Reunion coin based on the new Reunion logo.
  - Reunion publicity items focused on the Reunion activities and local attractions and were posted on the Association website.
  - All large poster signage included the Reunion logo.
  - The Chapter sent out useful tidbits about the Reunion (Blasts). These Blasts were sent out to the entire Association membership and were well received.
  - We requested letters from the Association President, the Chapter President, the 173d Airborne Brigade Commander and Command Sergeant Major and State/local politicians. All responded positively.
- We did a cost-benefit analysis and determined that printing the name tags, meal tickets, etc. on Avery perforated labels/cards would be the most cost-effective way to produce the name tags, the meal tickets, the tent name plates, etc.
- Coordination was made with the other Airborne Associations. They agreed to post our Reunion notice in their Association publications. This coordination should be made for future 173<sup>d</sup> Airborne Brigade Reunions. We should reciprocate by advertising the reunions of the other Airborne Associations.
- Jostens Printing does the Sky Soldier magazine. They proved to be a cost-effective and reliable printing option.
- The Chapter was able to save a lot of money by doing its publications in-house. The printing items were developed in Microsoft Publisher and sent to Jostens as PDFs. The industry graphic design standard is Adobe InDesign. Publisher was an effective alternative.
- Compiling the printing the Reunion manifest was a major issue. Sorting the Reunion attendee names and their associated guests proved to be a problem. The Reunion database structure should have a separate column that includes



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the associated sponsor/Association member. This will make sorting and association easier.

- There was no response to our Reunion press releases. Despite, contacting and following up on all the news outlets, this was a disappointing aspect to the Reunion effort. I have no recommendations on how to rectify the matter in the future.
- Most publicity items were printed in the Association website. This was a major and effective channel of communication.
- The Chapter was able to get local tourist booklets from the City of Alexandria Tourist Bureau. This saved much time and money.
- There were three successive last-minute changes to the Reunion Brochure. These changes caused major delays in printing the Brochure. In the future, it would best if there was enough slack in the printing task to allow last minute changes.

**Marketing.**

- The Chapter developed Donor/Sponsor and Vendor/Exhibitor packages early in planning cycle. These packages were comprehensive and reflected the Reunion theme. However, in the future, marketing to major donors should start two years out. Marketing to single donors should start a year out.
- Local eating/entertainment establishments should be contacted, a year out, and requested to pay for advertising space in the Reunion Brochure. Also ask them to consider a 10% discount to 173D ABA reunion participant who display their reunion name badge.



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## **Enclosure 4 – Vendor Room**

1. **General:** The reunion seems to have been a success. A great deal of the credit goes to all those who pitched in and made it all work, as needed.
2. **Vendor Room Operation.**
  - a. Need room diagram with notional placement of vendors depicted. Need roster of vendors with contact information
  - b. Need to ensure power and space requirements are adequately fulfilled.
  - c. Need to continue tightly controlled access to/from room; few keys
  - d. Chapter Vendor Table
    - i. Need 2-3 persons at most for the size operation we had more would've been too many.
    - ii. Need a clear understanding of what is to be sold, visible price list; complete initial inventory.
    - iii. Provide bags for items sold.
    - iv. Continue liberal exchange policy on sized clothing items
    - v. Institutionalize "fire sale" during last vending session to clear inventory
    - vi. Standardize shirt color schemes/imprints; include 503rd Airborne Infantry, 3-319th Artillery, E, 17th Cav, D, 16th Armor in proper colors
    - vii. Find and implement a **simple, dependable, credit card reading system – we had issues with the PayPal App**
    - viii. Develop and employ a tick sheet listing all possible transactions to enable quick, accurate tracking of all cash sales
    - ix. Continue use of coupons redeemed at the Chapter table in registration packets for material items like challenge coins (brings potential customers to the table).
    - x. Recommend ordering visors for women.
    - xi. Final inventory of remaining stock items after final session
3. **General Membership Meeting**
  - i. Publish agenda ahead of time or hand out at the beginning of the meeting.
  - ii. Discuss business items first
  - iii. Start on time
  - iv. . Recommendation: The proposal to place 173rd-sponsored benches outside/at VA facilities is a good one -- useful service, good advertising. Placing 173rd-sponsored benches at Fisher



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Houses and active installation med facilities does the same thing and may increase the likelihood that the younger people using them **will more actively consider joining/supporting the 173rd Association.**



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## **Enclosure 5 – Bus Tours**

### **Overview**

There were five individual bus tours events offered at the 2018 Reunion:

- The first day of the reunion Wednesday 23 May 2018 there were two vendor run tours.
  - They provided an afternoon tour of Arlington National Cemetery with wreath laying ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and at the 173d Airborne Brigade Marker.
  - Their second tour was a night tour of the various monuments in Washington, DC.
- Thursday 24 May Chapter 1 sponsored a tour of the Manassas/Bull Run Battlefield.
- Friday 25 May Chapter 1 sponsored two tours:
  - The first was a tour to the Vietnam Veterans National Memorial (The Wall) This tour included a wreath laying and brief ceremony at The Wall. Then time was provided for name rubbings and visits to other monuments around the Mall.
  - The second was a Shopping Trip to Tanger Outlet Mall at National Harbor

### **The Vendor Tours**

- Both vendor tours were regarded as value added by those who took them; and enhanced the success of the reunion. I believe they had 5 buses on each tour.
- If vendor tours are used at future reunions the host chapter should not allow them to operate under the Vendor Room Contract.
  - The vendor paid us the \$250 fee for a vendor table, 2 chairs and a waste basket which was no problem. Our expectation was that the vendor would do all the planning and coordination which they in fact did.
  - We had not anticipated the amount of continuous coordination that was required from the beginning of the planning and registration phases through the execution of the reunion. After the registration process began



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we realized that there was too much confusion caused by having payments for the vendor tours being sent directly to the vendor so we added payments for those tours into our registration process.

- In retrospect we should have contracted with them just like we did with the Bus Company we used for the chapter sponsored tours.

### **Manassas/Bull Run Battlefield Tour**

- What Went Well
  - This tour was limited to two buses because we could only get two Park Rangers to act as the tour guides.
  - Manifest
    - Creating the tour manifest and grouping the sky soldier with his party was crucial to ensuring that the soldier and his guest were assigned to the same bus.
    - Receiving the manifest several days prior to the reunion was essential to assigning attendees to their respective buses and creating the bus manifests.
  - Bus Captains and Helpers: Assigning bus captains, and particularly a helper, facilitated the loading of people onto the correct bus initially, re-boarding after each stop, and ensuring that everyone was on their assigned bus for the return trip.
  - Accountability of Guest
    - Wrist Bands: The issuing of color coded wrist bands greatly facilitated tracking people as they got on and returned to the buses after each stop. It ensured that the bus captains/helpers could quickly and easily determine if anyone attempted to get on a different bus. (Some people did inadvertently attempt to board the wrong bus, but the colored wrist band allowed their prompt identification and direction to the correct bus.)
    - Bus Manifest: Having a manifest list with separate columns for each stop facilitated the process of checking people on initially, after each stop, and the final loading for the return to the hotel.
  - Tour Signs: The signs for the tour and each bus (buses were numbered) were placed at several points in the hotel lobby and at the hotel entrance to assist attendees to know where to go and to help the bus captains keep their group somewhat together.
  - ) Pre-Reunion E-Mails to Tour Attendees



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- Dividing Tour Guide Duties: Knowing that some of the attendees/family members might not want or be able to engage in some of the walking through the grassy and muddy areas, the two guides assumed supportive roles. The Park guide gave the primary tour for those who walked while the Park Docent remained with those who did not walk and informed them of the particular events germane to that portion of the battlefield. This ensured that all guests received the maximum relevant battlefield information
- Recommendations:
  - Arrival times for the buses must be coordinated so that pick-up times are met.
  - Signs for tour assembly areas need to be in place early. For morning tours the signs should be in place the evening before the tour.
  - Establish rally points for tours with the hotel in the planning process then verify the day before the event.
  - Updating the Tour Manifest Roster. Be prepared to make last minute changes in manifests due to cancellations and/or additional participants.

### **Vietnam Veterans National Memorial Tour**

- This tour was initially planned for 4 Buses, due to increased requests we had the bus company add a fifth bus. The evening prior to the tour coordination was made with bus company regarding the arrival time of the buses. At that time we again confirmed with them that we had handicap personnel in wheel chairs and were assured that there would be no problem.
- Assembly signs for each bus load were in place. Color coded bus numbers were prepared, individual bus manifests were produced and color coded wrist bands were provided to the bus captains.
- When the buses arrived we had 6 instead of the anticipated 5. The bus company had added a mini-bus with hydraulic lift for wheel chair participants.
  - Our bus captains reacted as true Sky Soldiers and got everyone on a bus. In fact we were able to get several families on the buses who had not signed up for the tour.

### **Shopping Trip to Tanger Outlet Mall at National Harbor**

- This trip required only one mini bus we had 13 participants.
- Lesson learned – this tour should not have been scheduled at the same time as the tour to the Wall.



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## **Enclosure 6 – Hospitality Room**

The Hospitality Room is critical for reunions, since it is the core location for members to meet, tell stories, catch up and socialize. Based on my informal survey, every attendee used the Hospitality Room during their reunion visit.

What went right:

- We decided to serve Popcorn in the HR and it was a big hit. It is inexpensive, easy to produce in large batches and the attendees liked it.
- We purchased a Theater Grade popcorn machine and premixed popcorn packs on the internet. It was cheaper than renting one and can be used in future reunions if the next chapter will pay the shipping.
- We used paper cereal bowls purchased in bulk at Costco instead of bags or boxes. Much easier to fill, easy to clean up and you can return any surplus to Costco for a refund.
- We had extra staff available to help in the HR. The HR is open at least 12-14 hours per day and takes extra staff to pop popcorn, answer questions and solve any issues that might arise. We could have used more, but it worked out.

Areas for improvement:

- We contracted for a band. It got mixed reviews, some folks loved it and some hated it because they were trying to talk and the band was very loud. There is a need for entertainment, but if I had it to do all over again I might have had the hotel partition the room to separate the band from the folks who wanted to talk. The tables outside the HR on the patio of the hotel did this, but then things become weather dependent. May also want to consider a DJ instead of a band since the kinds of music are more varied with a good DJ.
- We could have used more HR staff. What we had is adequate, but it made for some very long days. Get HR staff volunteers early and get the schedule down early.
- Get the Rules of Engagement for serving Popcorn & Beer down as part of the initial contract negotiations. We were not sure we would be able to serve Popcorn in the HR until we just went and did it. The Chapter had a donor willing to donate kegs of beer, but it cost significant \$\$ for us to provide donated beer to



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the members. The problem was a Virginia State Hotel law. In the end the hotel benefited, because it increased the bar sales in the HR significantly.

- The HR is a great place to post information on activities and who is attending. Since almost everyone swings by it is good place to dispense information. May also be a good place for ad-hoc fund raising,