

2026 RAJA Newsletter

The Retired Army Judge Advocates Association (RAJA) annual meeting was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, from 27 to 31 May. The meeting marked the 50th Anniversary of our organization. To commemorate this significant event in RAJA history, every registrant received a specially designed RAJA lapel pin and a brief history of RAJA. We stayed in the beautiful and historic downtown hotel, the Netherland Plaza Hotel. Opened in 1931, the authentic French Art Deco Character Hotel has been recognized as a National Historic Landmark. Our hosts were Pauline and Steve Lancaster, Peggy and Gerry St. Amand, and Marion and Gil Fegley. Our trio of hosts planned an exciting weekend celebrating the founding of RAJA.

Golfers departed early Thursday morning for the annual golf outing at the Blue Ash Golf Course, superbly organized by RAJA golf czar, Al Toomey. All participants received RAJA logo golf balls and RAJA logo golf hats. That evening, Mike Chapman, RAJA President, welcomed all attendees at the icebreaker at the hotel. Mike recognized first-time attendees Gene and Joan Bian, and Becky Ross, Jack Rice's daughter. Other first-time attendees were Dave Carey and Mindy O'Donnell, Tara Osborn, and Nancy Waldron.

Friday morning began with a bus ride to visit the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright Paterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. The world's largest military aviation museum includes more than 350 aerospace vehicles and missiles, and thousands of artifacts in a 20-acre indoor facility. Lunch was provided in a private sitting area in the museum. After a long day, we returned to the hotel acknowledging the unforgettable experience of seeing these extraordinary exhibits.

As customary, Friday night was a free evening to enjoy dinner with groups of RAJA friends. Some of us walked to the nearby Cincinnati Reds Great American Ball Park to watch the Reds play the Atlanta Braves. Organized by John Altenburg, it was a relaxing evening at the ballpark. Thanks John!

Attendees met Saturday morning in the hotel ballroom for our annual business meeting. Mike again thanked our hosts and the first-time attendees. Geri Bush gave the Treasurer's report, and Tom Strassburg updated the attendees on the latest changes to our insurance policy. All paused for a moment of silence to honor those members of the JAG family who had passed away since our last meeting in Portland. Wayne Anderson, Charles Baccus, Philip Bandy, Sam Brick, Karen Fair, Kim Gibson, Rob Lloyd, Bryan Spencer, Cal Tichenor, and Charlie Watkins.

Reelected to serve as members of the RAJA Board of Directors were Mike Chapman, Gil Fedley, Geri Bush, Tom Strassburg, Steve Werner, Jim Gerstenlauer, Pauline Lancaster, Lisa Schenck, Jim Schmidli, Chuck Pede, and Barbara Fowler.

Immediately after the business meeting, Mike introduced the meeting's guest speaker, Brigadier General Terri J. Erisman, Commander, The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School and Assistant Judge Advocate General Defense Services. We were honored to have BG Erisman

speak to us about the mission changes and challenges confronting our Corps. Her insightful and excellent presentation was appreciated by all attendees.

Saturday night's banquet marked the conclusion of our historic weekend in Cincinnati. The evening began with Polly Lancaster, granddaughter of Pauline and Steve Lancaster, singing the National Anthem. As part of our 50th Anniversary celebration, Mike recognized the oldest living RAJA member, Darrell Peck, 95 years old. Also honored was Jim Mundt who has attended the most RAJA meetings (42), and the longest married couple, Dave and Daly Schreck.

Mike announced that next year's annual meeting is scheduled for 20-23 May 2027, in San Antonio, Texas, hosted by Julie Hasdorff and her husband, John Convery.

Thanks again to the Lancasters, St. Amands, and the Fegleys for a great weekend, and a special thanks to Marion and Gil Fegley for hosting the nightly hospitality suite that provided a terrific way to end each day.

All 115 attendees will remember the unforgettable weekend in Cincinnati commemorating the 50th anniversary of our wonderful organization.