

## **A SHORT HISTORY OF RAJA, 1976 TO 2004**

**by John Jay Douglass**

**(with a 2005 – 2011 addendum by Tim and Linda Naccarato,  
a 2012 – 2020 addendum by Jim Gerstenlauer, and a 2021 – 2024 addendum  
by Mike Chapman)**

In 1952, the Uniform Code of Military Justice came into effect and its first application in a combat area was in Korea. The act called for more military lawyers and many of the World War II veterans found themselves serving in a little known part of Asia. Some few had served as JAGs during the Big War but many were former combat arms or service branch officers who had attended law school after the war and now were wearing new insignia. Others were young law school graduates subject to the draft and looked to the JAG as their home for two years or four. For many of these, one of those years was spent in Korea.

The Korean theater was cold and miserable or hot and uncomfortable. The cities had been destroyed by war. The air smelled of human waste spread on the plantings (Bob Hope is reported to have said on his debarking from a plane, “What is that smell. I know what it is but what have they done to it?”) The Korean culture and people were unlike Americans in many respects. All in all, the troops continually counted up their points and hoped for an early return to the Land of the Big PX. In the early fifties, the Land of the Morning Calm did not appear likely to become a tourist Mecca.

Twenty five years later, the Korean government and its leadership recognized that the immense changes which had occurred were not comprehended by the thousands of troops who had served there from the United States, Britain, Australia, the Philippines and others. They thus began a program to entice veterans of that war to return learn first hand of the enormous strides that has been made in a quarter of a century. In a letter to Jim Mundt in 1996, Zane Finklestein, who was the SJA for United States Forces Korea/Eighth Army in 1976 he stated:

The return of the Judge Advocates was one the first . . . .  
What made this group’s visit particularly significant to those of us in Korea was the objection voiced by the then Assistant Judge Advocate General and ignored by the group to the “fact” that KVA like almost everything in Korea used both private and government funds in its activities. After the “RAJA” group participated, no other group felt it necessary to formally inquire. The then CINC (General Stilwell) was particularly pleased with the outcome.

In any event, early in 1976, Wally Solf, a former JAG and then a civilian chief in international law in JAGO was approached by the Korean Embassy in Washington to come up with names of JAGs who had served during the war who might be invited to make a return trip to Korea. Col. Solf called Len Petkoff, then working on the Washington Metro project, and discussed it with him. The only requirement was that one of the invitees be a judge. In early March 1976, a varied group of retired member of the Judge Advocate Generals Corps who has served in Korea in the fifties received phone calls from the Korean Embassy in Washington. Would the Korea vet be interested in making a trip with wife on Korean Air lines for six days in Korea all expense paid from Los Angeles as part of the Korean Service Veterans Revisit program? Those who looked upon it as an adventure soon received an invitation in writing which was co- signed by the President of the Seoul Bar Association. It was clearly to be a lawyer's trip.

Embarkation aboard KAL was from Los Angeles where all invitees met for the first time. Some had known others from service together and others were only acquainted from old JAG Conferences. . The group included Larry and Mary Fuller (he had been the Eighth Army SJA after the war), Clio "Red" and Betty Straight, Bruce and Betty Babbitt (he had served in the fighting Army at the Yalu), Bert and Dee Ellis (probably the senior Korean veteran JAG on the list) Howard and Blanche Levy, Len and Ruth Petkoff, John Jay and Papoose Douglass (he claimed membership in the Korean bar), Tom and Marie Meagher, and Judge and Mrs. Warren Blair, the Chief Administrative Judge on the Securities and Exchange Commission (who satisfied the requirement to include a judge.).

The group were met on arrival by senior Korean officials and by Finklestein. The group was billeted at the President Hotel in Seoul began an intensive visit of Korea, observation of a Korea trial, visits to senior judicial officials, social engagements including dinners at the home of individual sponsors from the Korea bar and a delightful party given by Zane and Rosemary Finklestein. The Korean papers covered the visit as did the North Korean press which stated that " Eighteen Korean War Bandits ...serving the :U.S. Imperialists Aggressors had arrived in Seoul." The group was further described as "mercenaries who had participated in the war of aggression." Who would have thought that those wives were that bad?

At breakfast toward the end of the visit, the Babbitts, Petkoffs and Douglass' all agreed this was a great event. They also came up with the suggestion that it would be great to get together with other retired JAGs. On the return trip (in first class) Betty Babbitt and Papoose Douglass nagged Bruce and John Jay into action to form a group who could bring the JAGs together for some kind of annual reunion. The thinking came up with a name and RAJA was born high over the Pacific.

To show what a little female urging can do, RAJA was formed quickly by Babbitt and Douglass and by May of that year in a letter of thanks to Zane Finklestein for his kindness to the visitors, he was invited to become a member of the Retired Army Judge Advocate Association as soon as he became eligible.

Under the fine hand of Babbitt the organization was incorporated in Florida, where he was in private practice. Incorporators included Floridians Dave Chase and Tom Oldham. By early in 1977, with the help of the Commandant, Col. Barney Brannen and his wife Anita, plans were underway for a gathering in early summer of retired regular army Judge Advocates at the JAG School in Charlottesville. Old timers could not believe that Douglass and Babbitt the new President and Secretary Treasurer has committed them to billeting in the JAG School. They just could not believe the facilities in the new building which had opened in 1975.

It was decided early on that the RAJA gathering would generally follow the format of the annual JAG conference. That is, there would be an opening ice-breaker and the meeting (required because RAJA was a corporation) would be the next day. A ladies luncheon was arranged at Hollymead. The following evening was devoted to a banquet and the fourth morning the members departed after brunch at the Club on the top floor of the new building. . An important part of the whole operation was golf which was arranged at Keswick. In another “democratic” decision it was ruled that the only active duty invitee would be The Judge Advocate General and he would be limited to twenty five seconds for any remarks he might like to make at the banquet. Actually Wil Persons, the then current TJAG, used only 20 seconds for which he was duly commended.

The after-action report stated “For those who never believed it would come off, it did! Seventy Retired Army Judge Advocates including wives sat down to dinner at the Boar’s Head In for the first annual RAJA conference”. A Jefferson cup was awarded to John Kimball as the Retiredest who had retired in 1958. A cup was awarded to Dick and Pat Garties as the Travelingest who had attended from Hawaii. The report stated that there was consensus to have another gathering in 1978 and both Hawaii and San Antonio were mentioned as suitable locations. . At the 18 minute business meeting the slate of Douglass as President, Straight as Vice-President and Babbitt as Secretary-Treasurer and Petkoff and Garties as directors was approved. . Dues of \$5 per annum were accepted and \$2 for widows. It was reported that as of the meeting there were 97 members.

The following year, RAJA met in San Antonio, certainly an appropriate location as that city is known as the “mother-in-law” of the Army and was the home of a large group of retired JAGs. The old Menger Hotel was the meeting place. This historic hostel prides itself as the place from which Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders assembled for the departure for Cuba in Spanish-American War.

None of the JAGs from that war were able to attend the meeting. Golf at Fort Sam was again on the program and the business meeting was even shorter than the first one. The banquet was held at the Officers Club at Fort Sam Houston and the Army was good enough to provide bus transportation to the Post. This banquet confirmed the practice of asking the senior general officers present to make a series of toasts: to the United States, to the President, to the Army, to the JAG Corps and a toast from the newest member of RAJA to the ladies. At the banquet Carlos McAfee was given the Jefferson Cup as the Retiredest JAG present and Ed Kurth was awarded the Travelingest Cup for his trek from Wilmington, Del. (He must have enjoyed the trip for he later moved to San Antonio.) At the business meeting a committee was appointed to select and organize a meeting for the following year on the west coast.

In the following year, the program was arranged by Bill and Jane O'Donovan in San Francisco. The Marine Memorial Hotel was headquarters for RAJA and the group was beginning to get larger. Golf was at the Presidio and the ladies' luncheon was held in a delightful restaurant, the Greenhouse, not far from the headquarters but a climb up the Bay City's hills. At the business meeting it was approved to include JAG Warrant Officers as members. The Cup for the Retiredest JAG was given to George Gardes and the Travellingest Cup was awarded to Howard and Blanche Levy, then living in Providence, R.I. A Jefferson Cup for the RAJA Host and Hostess was presented to the O'Donovans, Bill and Jane.

In a Warning Order late in 1979, the nature of the organization and its purpose was sent to members and prospective members. Membership had grown to over 200 and the limitations of the Privacy Act which prevented use of mailing lists from DA or OTJAG were explained. Members were asked to help build the organization by word of mouth. an act which should not be hard for JAGs. The letter also announced that the next gathering was set for June 15-17 at Williamsburg and stated that it was anticipated that RAJA would "repeat the geographical pattern of East Coast, Mid-America, West Coast in subsequent years."

With Bruce Babbitt setting up the details from his office in Fort Walton Beach, Fl. RAJA did gather in Williamsburg in 1980. The pattern which had been set was followed and for the first time included low caliber tennis as well as the professional type golf expected of retired Judge Advocates. At the business meeting a moment of silence was taken for our departed comrades. For the first time committees for the following year and the year after were named to recommend sites for 1981 and 1982. The Retiredest Cup was awarded to Bert Ellis, an original member of the Korea gang. He established a nice new custom of bringing packages of almonds from his farm (ranch) in California for the attendees. The Travelingest Cup was given to George Michel. We also had a

young RAJA present when Jim and Lavinia Booth arrived with their FOUR month old son.

In 1981, RAJA met for the first time in Colorado Springs with Tom Birch and Hube and Lou Miller as our hosts. The headquarters hotel was the Antlers in downtown Colorado Springs. From here we had the opportunity to visit Fort Carson, the Air Force Academy and to go up Pikes Peak. We even visited the home of Katharine Lee Bates who composed the words to America the Beautiful, which some consider the second national anthem. The golfers were at Fort Carson while others toured. Hube and Tom divided up the group and each entertained RAJA at their homes with food and libations. The banquet was held at the Antlers where Nat Reiger was given the cup for the Retiredest and Jack Lovrien was named the Travelingest RAJA of the year.

Heading west, in 1982 RAJA VI gathered in Monterrey, California near where many had served at Fort Ord or the Defense Language School. The group thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to tour this old city on the Pacific and to watch the sea lions on the rocks and eat on Cannery Row made famous by John Steinbeck. The RAJA hosts were Art and Jean Ireland who in addition to planning had a group visit their home in the hills outside Monterrey; at the annual banquet the Jefferson Cup for the Retiredest RAJA present was given to Winston Field and the cup for the Travelingest to Roy Steele.

RAJA VII was the biggest yet. The group met June 12, 1983 in Atlanta with headquarters in the Terrace Garden Inn in the Buckhead area of the city. The large gathering may have been augmented in part by the large contingent from Georgia, most of whom seemed to be working for some agency of the State of Georgia. The report noted that "the business meeting moved with great speed to the ill considered motion for adjournment by Paul Kovar in the absence of Swede Hansen in eleven minutes, Due to Kovar's apparent inability to articulate a simple motion the motion failed by acclamation and RAJA is apparently still in recess." Bob Williams, Marion Thurston and George Prugh were appointed to a committee to select a site on the west coast for 1985. Following the business meeting Bill Green, Chief of Criminal Law at the School gave a presentation on the status of the Corps, the School and military law changes. Three carloads of golfers took a long tour of North Georgia following a map prepared by Tom Murdock. The banquet was held at the Fort McPherson club. Col. Tom Pocher the SJA at McPherson had arranged for a bus to get the members there which was probably good considering the apparent inability to read maps. The TJAG, Major General Hugh Clausen overran his 25 second allowance for speaking the banquet according to Hube Miller, the timekeeper. The Retiredest cup was presented to R. McDonald Gray and the Travelingest cup was given to George Prugh. It was noted no one would qualify more than once for these awards. There was a standing

ovation for all present when Nobuko and Dick Snyder were awarded their RAJA Host Cup for the great work they did in making arrangements for this RAJA gathering.

Paul and Ruth Tobin were hosts for the 1984 meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. They were able to get us headquarters in the Seelbach Hotel and what a fine gathering it turned out to be. There were even some of the visitors who became acquainted with Kentucky bourbon during the short period of the annual gathering. A major event was an evening boat trip on the Ohio River. The ladies had a delightful lunch and the men met for lunch at the exclusive Pendennis Club in downtown Louisville. The major touring event was the trip to Churchill Downs for an afternoon of thoroughbred racing. The betting interspersed with real Kentucky Mint Juleps made this an afternoon to be remembered. Some RAJA members even came out winners. At the annual dinner after presentation of the RAJA Host cup to the Tobins, the Retiredest Cup was given to Clio "Red" Straight and the Travelingest award to George Gardes.

The first visit to Las Vegas for RAJA was in 1985. Bob Thorniley was our RAJA Host and was assisted by Jack Kinney from San Francisco. What an opportunity for the gambling element and those who love the Big Shows on the strip. Our headquarters hotel was with the Mafia at Caesar's Palace and what luxury. The banquet was held across the strip at the Imperial Palace. The TJAG Hugh Clausen was present to make remarks both at the business meeting and his 25 second talk at the banquet. The Retiredest Cup was presented to Jim Hanley and the Travelingest Cup went to Dick and Angie Deegan from Connecticut.

In 1986 RAJA returned to the east coast to Savannah where Wil and Chris Persons served as hosts in this delightful City of the Old South. Headquarters was in the Hyatt Regency right on the Savannah River with big ships going up river to the port and so close you could almost touch them. Golf, organized by Dick Rice at one of the Landings courses was a major event and the players were given golf visors to commemorate the occasion. Special events included a tour of the homes in this quaint city. The annual banquet was an oyster roast held at old Fort Jackson built in 1806 and we were greeted by re-enactors in Colonial uniforms playing fifes and drums. This format did not lend to any speeches so we were saved from a long address by TJAG Hugh Overholt. The "administration" was worried about this type of affair but there was no rain and a strong breeze drove away the mosquitoes and gnats all properly arranged by Will and Chris. Notwithstanding the format changes, awards for Retiredest went to Howard Hasting and the Travelingest RAJA to Jim Healey.

In 1987 it was back to mid-America for RAJA in Austin, Texas where we stayed at the Hyatt on Town Lake. This turned out to be one of the larger gatherings as

Texas JAGs turned out in force. .During our visit there was a boat trip on Town lake and also a bus trip to Johnson City to the LBJ ranch. The ladies had their luncheon at Green Pastures and the non-golfers took in one of the better barbecue joints in Austin. The annual banquet was held at the Capitol Club, now sadly gone. The Jefferson cup for the Retiredest RAJA was given to Ed Kurth and Larry Lougee, all the way from New Hampshire received the Travelingest Cup. There was general joy to see our hosts, Win and Mary Kelso receive their Jefferson Cup for a great job in 1987.

Back to the west coast and the furtherest point south for RAJA in 1988 when they met in sunny San Diego. Headquarters was at the Town and Country Motel, which was an ideal place for a gathering like RAJA. San Diego is great place to visit with its military installations, history, zoo and coast line. Marve and Jean Krieger outdid themselves in making this a great gathering. The banquet was held at the Admiral Kidd officers club on the Pacific Ocean. Dancing was enjoyed by all to OUR kind of music. Jasper Searles received the cup for the Retiredest JAG present and Pat and Alma Bishop went home with the Travelingest Cup.

RAJA XIII convened in the Treadway Hotel in Newport, Rhode Island with the registration set up by the faithful secretary, Bruce Babbitt. The ice-breaker that first evening included much food and drink which broke the ice. The following morning the required meeting was called to order by John Jay Douglass. Apparently the officers, Babbitt and Douglass have done away with the legalities of elections and just continue in office until objection may be made. Dave Bryant was appointed time keeper and with some help announced at the conclusion that the meeting had consumed nine minutes. The speed was in spirit of the time spent on treasury reports and minutes and resolutions to send \$100 to the Friends of the JAG School and a memorandum to Congress for reconsideration of Cat Cap (Catastrophic) Medicare legislation, a moment of silence for our departed members, acceptance of Pensacola for meeting next year and appointment of George Mickel, George Prugh and Jack Kinney for the 1991 meeting. Who says lawyers can move when golf is in the offing. Following the official meeting, TJAG Hugh Overholt brought the group up to date on JAG activities world wide. He was followed by Tom Crean, Commandant of the School who gave an update on School and legal matters of the Corps. The ladies luncheon was held at Oceancliff, one of the former mansions at Newport. Golfers went about their business but the tennis players were barred from the International Tennis Hall of Fame courts as the courts were not available until two days after the end of this RAJA. That evening the entire group were entertained in two sessions by RAJA Hosts Blanche and Howard Levie at their home built in 1864. All were delighted at the food and drink and amazed at the huge library collection, all classified by Howard. (He subsequently donated his great research library to the JAG School.) Tuesday there was a splendid tour of the mansions of Newport to include the

Bouvier (Jackie Kennedy) and the Breakers built by the Vanderbilts. The dinner was held at the Commissioned Officers Mess at the Newport Naval Station. As the TJAG had to leave early the only active duty officer was Tom Crean who gave the annual 25 second address. Bill Mullins who came in from Paris appropriately received the Travelingest Cup and Howard Levie received the Retiredest Cup and he and Blanche received the cup as RAJA Hosts for which they were loudly congratulated and thanked for a great job. Howard has now received a cup in every category. Following the dinner and presentations there was dancing led by Blanche.

The year 1990 took RAJA to Pensacola. Some found it hard to put this in the middle of America but the promoters pointed out that Pensacola is in the Central Time Zone and in the far west of Florida's panhandle. The program followed precedent with ice-breaker, annual meeting and words of advice from the acting TJAG Bill Suter. Pensacola provided a great opportunity to visit sites of interest including one of the old historic forts on the Gulf of Mexico, a tour of the USS Lexington, and the Naval Air Museum. Our hosts, Hube and Lou Miller invited all to their home for afternoon drinks and it should be noted that they lived over in Alabama. The program included the annual dinner at which Alan Todd received his cup as the Retiredest and Jack Kinney finally got his Travelingest Cup for coming from San Francisco (again).

When RAJA says it is going next to the west coast, they really meant it in 1991 when a great group met in Hawaii. A number of the visitors has arrived early to take a cruise around all the islands. We were headquartered in the Hale Koa, the great Army hotel at old Ft. DeRussy where many of the Vietnam types had taken R&R during those years. After a brief business meeting, TJAG John Fugh spoke on matters of concern in the Corps followed by Tom Strassburg, the Commandant of TJAGSA who brought RAJA up to date on the School and military law. Our RAJA hosts were Dick and Pat Garties who had done a splendid job of organizing this occasion to include golf and tennis and luncheons and parties. Most of the social events were held in Hale Koa which was so well situated to care for the group. The annual banquet was held at the Cannon Club up on the side of Diamond Head. In view of the long trip west for most attendees, it was decided not to award a Travelingest cup because other than the wise ones who had retired in paradise, all had come a long way.

Over Memorial Day weekend in 1992, RAJA returned to the Home of the Army Lawyer at Charlottesville. The headquarters was at the Boar's Head, a pretty spiffy upgrade for this group. Most of the business meetings were held in the then newly enlarged School and the members had a real tour of the School and an opportunity to see what was going on. Many were impressed with the computer learning center. The luncheon for the ladies was held at Farmington Country Club while



many of the golfers were playing at Birdwood. Tom Strassburg had been a recent commandant so the arrangements for this RAJA by Tom and Nancy were in great hands. The banquet with 200 present was held in the big dining room on the top floor of the School, formerly the officer's club and then known as the Community club. The Jefferson cup for Retiredest was presented to Paul Kovar.

RAJA XVII returned in 1993 for a second visit to San Antonio and the historic Menger Hotel "across the alley from the Alamo." The hospitality room was managed by Bruce Babbitt who somehow had up graded his title from Secretary-Treasurer to CEO. Since he did all the work to keep RAJA going, it was appropriate that his title be changed. The program continued from Ice-breaker on the first evening through the usual pattern. At the business meeting Ray Wicker was appointed time-keeper and Wayne Alley was his assistant and all they concluded was that it was a short meeting. Hugh Clausen, Zane Finklestein and Don Pierce were appointed as the site selection committee for the 1995 meeting on the east coast. Following the meeting, TJAG John Fugh gave a report on the Corps and its activities. He was followed by Col Dennis Corrigan, PPT&O and Col. John Cooke, Director of Academics from the School who gave a presentation on other aspects of JAG and the School. The ladies departed shortly for their luncheon at Los Patios and the golfers found their way to the links. The following day was devoted to sightseeing, riding the boat on the San Antonio river and more golf and tennis. Ken Youngblood was declared winner of the tennis doubles tournament. The banquet was held at the Fort Sam Houston officers club. Music was provided during the dinner hour and the crowd was entertained by the terpsichorean excellence of Blanche Levie and Ray Wicker. The Jefferson cup for Retiredest was presented to John TeSelle who was attending his first RAJA. TJAG John Fugh did limit himself to twenty five second barely and announced that next year he would be present as a full fledged member.

RAJA XVIII went to Reno in 1994 with headquarters at the Reno Hilton. At the annual meeting, first timer John Naughton was appointed timekeeper who later reported that the meeting consumed eight minutes. CEO Bruce Babbitt gave his usual abbreviated fiscal report. Co-Host Martha Johnson announced that those wishing to visit the Judicial College located in Reno should contact her for arrangements. It was noted that Jack Crouchet, Cecil Forinash, Ken Howard, Grady Moore, Richard Russell, Hank Watson and Ken Youngblood had all attended the College during their tours as military judge. Jim Mundt, Swede Hansen and Malcolm Yawn were appointed a committee to select a location for the 1996 program. Being a progressive organization, the President noted RAJA had not had an election in a long time and appointed a committee of Wil Persons, Vic DeFiori and Marv Krieger to prepare slate of nominees for the forthcoming meeting and to develop plans for the future of RAJA. Notwithstanding, the School was simultaneously hosting the Reserve JAG Conference, TJAG Michael Nardotti

made a fast trip to be with RAJA at Reno and updated the group on the state of the Corps and the downsizing of the Army. Substituting for the Commandant, the Director of Academics Lee Schinasi gave an update on the school and its activities. Bill Fulton, then the Colonel of the JAGC Regiment, introduced Gen. Nardotti who made a special presentation to Bruce Babbitt and John Jay Douglass designating them Distinguished Members of the Corps and presenting framed certificates to attest to this honor. Following the meeting the ladies repaired to the Delta Saloon for their luncheon and the golfers and tennisters went about their business. The grand banquet was held at the Hilton with music for dancing and there was much enjoyment at the Lindy Hop performed by Taine and Joe Conboy. Bruce Stevenson was announced as the golf champion and Dorothy Youngblood as the tennis champion. Because of the early departure of Gen. Nardotti, Wil Persons was allowed to finish his remarks made at the first RAJA. The cup for Retiredest was presented to Phil Wilson and cups were given to Martha Johnson and Jack Kinney for their great work as co-hosts for the Reno RAJA.

### **The Passing of the Flag**

The RAJA News covering the 1994 meeting included a notice that at the meeting in April 1995, there would be an election of Board of Directors and that the nominees were Paul Rice, Richard Dahlinger, Jim Mundt, Phil Meengs, Joe Conboy and Don Pierce. It was further announced that the board when elected would announce the new officers and at that meeting the official Change of Command would take place.

In 1995 RAJA XIX convened in Charleston, South Carolina hosted by Hugh and Betty Clausen. Our hotel was next to the arts and crafts market in the center of the city. The opening ice-breaker was well attended and highlighted by the introduction by Marge Sneed of her grandson, a third year man at the Citadel escorting Miss Teen America. The annual meeting was convened the next morning promptly at nine a.m. with Steven Werner as timekeeper even though he noted that he had no second hand on his watch. Secretary Babbitt gave his report of the financial situation and the proposed transfer of the secretary's function and record keeping to the School following this meeting. Col. Joe Graves the Commandant advised that the Alumni Association files had already been transferred and this should work out well. A site selection committee of Jack Kinney, George Prugh and Phil Meengs was appointed for the 1997 meeting. Wil Persons reported on the special committee appointed the prior year to consider management changes in RAJA. They agreed that it was time to bring in new leadership and looked for individuals under the age of 65 to serve on the Board of Directors and had selected Mundt, Pierce, Rice, Meengs and Conboy as indicated in the notice with the news from the prior years meeting. On motion of Bruce Babbitt and properly seconded,

these members were elected. Bruce then nominated Jim Mundt as President and Don Pierce as Secretary. These nominees were elected by acclamation. Following the meeting, TJAG Michael Nardotti gave a presentation on the state of the Corps complete with visuals. He then asked Howard Levie to come forward. After citing an in-depth biography, TJAG had Col. Graves read the award of the Medal of Freedom for Howard Levie's long and continued labors particularly in the field of international law and prisoners of war. Gen. Nardotti then presented a plaque designating Levie a Distinguished Member of the Regiment and the members gave Levie a standing ovation. Col. Graves then discussed the School and the recent visit of the ABA Committee on Accreditation with particular interest in the Masters Program. Thereafter the golfers departed but the rains limited their game to only four holes. The ladies fared better and were able to enjoy their annual luncheon.

The following day there were opportunities to visit the Citadel and Fort Sumter. The banquet was held at the Hawthorne Suites Hotel. The group was pleased to have as the guest of Jim Baker, General and Mrs. William Westmoreland. It was announced that of the original group who were in Korea that helped start RAJA, present were Howard Levie and Blanche, Bruce Babbitt, Ruth and Len Petkoff, Tom and Marie Meagher and Papoose and John Jay Douglass. Because Gen. Nardotti had to leave early, George Prugh was called upon to make the TJAG remarks and he stayed within his allotted time. The Jefferson Cup for Retiredest JAG present was given to Phil Pollack and a cup was given to the RAJA Host and Hostess Betty and Hugh Clausen. Jim Mundt was then called to the podium and Douglass passed him the flag as new President of RAJA. Mundt accepted his new position and immediately took the prerogative of announcing the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Phil Wilson and called upon all to sing Happy Birthday. And another great meeting ended.

The first meeting under new officers was RAJA XX in 1996 and the second in Colorado Springs. Believe it or not the first day featured a Colorado blizzard which covered the ground but by tee time the white cover was gone. The meeting was brought to order the new President Jim Mundt, who introduced the newly named Secretary, Steve Werner who replaced Don Pierce who had served until his candidacy for office in the Florida VFW. The new Board of Directors established a life membership fee of \$100 for those who do not care to be signing small checks annually. The site selection committee for 1988 was appointed including Jack Rice, John Baker and Bill Fulton. Timekeeping for the meeting was handled by Scott Magers and assisted by Fred Green. Following the meeting the ladies attended their luncheon. The golfers hit them hard and long at the Air Force Academy golf course. The following day tours were arranged to the Air Force Academy, NORAD, the Garden of the Gods and Helen Hunt Falls. The annual banquet was opened by the presentation of the colors by a color guard from Fort

Carson under direction of SGM Fred Heedt, retired sergeant of the JAG Corps. Major Jim Coakley presented a program on the flag of the United States. Babbitt and Douglass were presented numbered prints of the JAG School for their long services for RAJA. The Jefferson cup for Retiredest was awarded to Karl Wolf. Jim Mundt did a great job in his new duties as President and with Lee and co-hosts Steve and Karen Werner did a splendid job in arranging the Colorado Springs RAJA.

Following the precedent of the JAG Conference in calling each succeeding conference the best yet, RAJA XXI in 1997 in Palm Springs got this same accolade. Our headquarters was in the Palm Springs Marquis hotel which was noted for its accommodations and hospitality. Over seventy early arrivals attended the Palm Springs Follies featuring Howard Keel and chorus girls ranging from 54 to 84 years of age including a retired 84 year old female Army colonel (not JAG!) who finished the programs with the splits. Jim Mundt handled the business meeting with dispatch and appointed a by-laws committee of Steve Werner, Mac Yawn, and Mike Kennett. Bruce Babbitt noted that this was suggested earlier but no one seemed to have much interest. The selection committee for the 1999 RAJA was Joe Conboy, Scott Magers, Fred Green, Dale Kile and Molly Newman. Following the meeting TJAG Mike Nardotti updated the group on the work of the Corps and Col. Joe Graves gave a presentation on the School. On adjournment, the ladies repaired to a fancy French restaurant for their usual luncheon and the golfers found their way to the links. Fifty brave souls took the aerial tramway to the mountain top for the exciting views. A number were invited to visit the home of Jim Healey in Indian Wells for cocktails and a buffet. The banquet was held in the Marquis. The cup for Retiredest was presented to Jim Booth who advised that the little baby he and Lavinia brought to the first RAJA graduated from college that spring. The RAJA Host cup was presented to Phil and Ann Meengs who gave credit to great help they had received from Doris and Bob Peckham. These four were to be thanked for the drinks each evening and the breakfast each morning in the hospitality suite.

In 1998 it was time to return to the East Coast and RAJA XXII really did, for we went to Cocoa Beach Florida from May 1-4. Bruce and Jean Stevenson were hosts and they did a great job and made sure that there was no rain in Florida for the entire period of the meeting. Not only that but they arranged for the landing of the shuttle Columbia during the meeting so that it could be observed by all who were present. It is really hard to top that! All of the meetings with the exception of the ladies luncheon were held at the Cocoa Beach Hilton and began with the typical Icebreaker on the first evening. There was the usual annual business meeting on this first full day in the morning. At that time it was announced that life memberships was available at \$100 a throw or as an alternative members can pay five dollars a year; and the administration would like you to pay and get up-to-

date. Col. Jerry St. Amand, the current Commandant at the school, brought us up-to-date on doings at Charlottesville.

Special events included the opportunity to sail on the 15 passenger catamaran from Boca Raton on the intercoastal waterway which Bernie and Kathy Radosh sailed up to Cocoa Beach just for the occasion and the tour of Kennedy Space Center. The special activities didn't prevent the golfers from getting out of the golf courses nor prevent the ladies from attending their luncheon at the Officers Club at Patrick Air Force Base. The annual banquet was held at the Cocoa Beach Hilton. In a departure from tradition, we heard the address by the TJAG, Major General Walt Huffman who was unable to be present for the business meeting. It was noted that the banquet that there were three members present who served as JAGs in World War II, Phil Wilson, Howard Levie and Marion Thurston. The Jefferson Cup for the Retiredest present was given to John Forsell. The evening was concluded by dancing to a real band. Bruce and Jean Stevenson were awarded the Jefferson cup as Hosts and were applauded for a great RAJA.

From the Atlantic Ocean in 1999 Raja XXIII took us to the banks of the Missouri River in Kansas City with headquarters at the Ritz-Carlton. (Footnote: Following this meeting, the report mailed to the members indicated that consideration would be given to counting the "boondoggle" to Korea as the first meeting of RAJA which would make this meeting number XXIV.) Early birds had the opportunity to attend the Royals/Yankee baseball game (the Royals lost which didn't seem to bother anyone.) The Icebreaker on Sunday night was as usual a smashing success although chilly weather and threat of rain moved the group from poolside to the rooftop dining room.

The business meeting ran longer than normal and was preceded by a committee of the whole which considered the question about membership for reserve officers who were qualified for retirement. For many years, only retired regulars were eligible to join RAJA. Noting the increased contribution of reservists to the Corps worldwide, the group passed unanimously a motion to extend membership to retired reservists. It was announced that there are 38 new members, most recently retired. The group mourned the passing of Bruce Babbitt, longtime secretary of RAJA, and agreed to honor him by establishing a scholarship for children or grandchildren of JAGs pursuing an advanced degree, preferably in law. TJAG Major General Walt Huffman briefed the members on the status of the Corps. The site selection committee for 2001 was appointed to consist of Jack Rice, Jim McCune, Dennis Corrigan and John Cruden. It is sad to report that the three timers of the meeting, Tim Naccarato, Ray Ruppert and Bill Eckhardt still could not get the time of the meeting correct.

On the second day many of the members went on a tour of the Truman Museum and other sightseeing attractions around Kansas City. A few traveled out to Fort Leavenworth to renew old memories of being assigned on that fine old post. The golfers went out in spite of the heavy rain and the scores indicated how bad the weather was or how bad the golfers were.

The annual banquet had been originally scheduled for the rooftop facilities in the Ritz-Carlton but somebody with clout outranked us, but the good hosts, Fred and Jean Green, did a great job of negotiating and as a result the Hotel provided free parking, continuous goodies in the hospitality room and more important an open bar and champagne and wine at the annual banquet. Needless to say nobody complained about missing the rooftop facility. The Jefferson cup for Retiredest JAG present went to Toxey Sewell and of course the Host cup to the Greens.

In 2000, RAJA gathered in Sacramento, California. (Your historian is having trouble deciding whether this is RAJA XXIV or RAJA XXV, which clearly depends on how the original trip to Korea is counted.) However you count it, the meeting was a great success Tim and Linda Naccarato and Dennis and Livvy Coupe as co-hosts really did themselves proud. (The records do not indicate whether it was necessary to provide two Jefferson cups) The business meeting was relatively uneventful. Due to the inability of TJAG to be present because of the cancellation of his flight, Col. Calvin Lederer, the School Commandant took over for both the TJAG and School responsibility and brought the group up to date on all JAG activities. Many of the group went on an outstanding tour of a winery near Murphy, California. They enjoyed the beautiful grounds and an excellent meal in the dining room. The ladies held their luncheon in Old Sacramento City and afterwards had an opportunity to do some of the favorite recreation, “shopping.”

At the evening banquet Brigadier General Morrison former National Guard assistant to TJAG and Brigadier General Richard Eres, on a non-JAG assignment as the head of the Army element of the California National Guard, were present as guests. It was significant that Ernie Auerbach was present as the first retired reserve JAG to attend under the rules change made the previous year. The Jefferson cup for Retiredest JAG was presented to Jim Henley.

RAJA 2001 or RAJA XXVI (under the new counting system) or Williamsburg 2 was hosted by Jim and Gale McCune and ably assisted by Bridget and Jim Murphy. This meeting was unique in that it started with a pre-meeting tour of the new facility at Balston in Arlington. This is the home of USALSA, the criminal division of GAD, DAD, TDS and the Court as well as the litigation division. Those on the tour were very impressed with the modern equipment, furniture and surroundings. Unfortunately the members on the tour had to drive on Saturday

through a terrible rainstorm to arrive at Williamsburg. Nonetheless the hospitality room was opened fully stocked and provided an opportunity for all to initially mingle.

On Sunday morning the members were invited to visit the technology augmentation litigation and high technology courtrooms at William and Mary law school under the direction of Fred Lederer. That afternoon another group visited the Jamestown and Yorktown settlements and dinner was on your own.

The annual meeting was held with the normal speed under the direction of President Jim Mundt. The TJAG and the Commandant of the JAG school, Cal Lederer (the active-duty brother of Professor Fred at William and Mary) gave an update on the status of the Corps and the school. The ladies held their annual luncheon and the men tried to imitate them but certainly their meeting was less structured. The banquet was held on Monday evening and Jim Robinson was given his Jefferson cup as the Retiredest JAG present. The dinner guests were entertained with a speech about Colonial Virginia in the early days of the Revolution by Mike Haas. President Mundt read an article which he had noted in Pacific Stars & Stripes while he and Lee were touring Asia which announced that Burt Ellis, one of the original Korean group died in December, 2000 at age 97 and left a bequest to his law school, the University of Idaho of \$6 million, the largest gift from an individual to the school in its 112 year history. Among the guests was James Booth Jr. who was with his parents Jim and Lavinia Booth. Young James recently graduated cum laude from Occidental College. He had attended his first meeting of RAJA at age four months in 1980 when RAJA first met at Williamsburg.

San Antonio was the site for RAJA for the third time in May 2002, this time hosted by Janet and Scott Magers. This traditional Army town still draws a good crowd and much time is spent touring the city the Riverwalk and probably even the Alamo. A special tour was arranged for Sunday afternoon of the city and dinner as usual was on our own. At the Monday morning traditional business meeting the good news was that we are financially in good shape. Members were encouraged to get a \$100 life membership to make Steve Werner, the Secretary-Treasurer, happier. At this meeting it was agreed that the proposal to hold RAJA 2003 in Garmisch would be canceled as there was insufficient interest. It was announced that the 2003 meeting will be held in Las Vegas Nevada and that in 2004 the group will meet in Portland, Maine. The briefing was given by TJAG Major General Tom Romig and by the commandant of the JAG school Rick Rosen. This is the first time in many years that that the TJAG was accompanied by his wife and we were pleased to have Pam Romig with the group for the weekend. Following the annual meeting, the afternoon was given to golf and the annual ladies luncheon and the banquet was held that evening. The retiredest award was

given to Howard Husband. He beat out Jim Booth by only a few months. (Actually, Jim has already received the award in 1997 but he wanted another cup.) Bill Green read to the group an article by the President of the ABA, Robert Hershon, praising the work of Army lawyers through history.

RAJA 2003 also known as Raja XXVIII returned once again to Las Vegas Nevada, this time to the Mirage Hotel. The hosts were Mike and Lorraine Kennett who were ably assisted by Ron and Pat Cundick and Wayne Price and what a show they put on! The members did find that through the years Las Vegas was no longer the inexpensive place to drink and dine. The Board of Directors met on Monday evening and selected the site committee for 2005 consisting of Earl Lassiter, Steve Lancaster and Bill Heaston. They also appointed a history committee to begin a brief history of the organization which is to be given the new members so they will gain an appreciation for the background and traditions of RAJA. The board selected Howard Levie, John Jay Douglass and Len Petkoff, members of the original RAJA in Korea, as the history committee.

Two tours were held on Tuesday, May 27, as well as the golf tournament at Nellis Air Force Base. The first tour was to Hoover Dam and the museum. In the two busloads participated in the Celebrity Lights Tour. This included stops at the Bellagio with its water and music show and a tour through the rest of Las Vegas, with commentary, to the several blocks long overhead light show plus a sampling of Las Vegas shows done on gondolas from the ceiling. Las Vegas builds it bigger and better and more expensive each year

The annual meeting was held on Wednesday, May 28 and lasted nine minutes and 45 seconds. This was followed by a presentation by Major General Romig, TJAG and the commandant Col. Rick Rosen. The ladies then adjourned to a fantastic luncheon at the Venetian hotel across the street from the Mirage. The annual banquet was held that evening with the traditional 30 second speech by The Judge Advocate General after a much longer introduction by the President of RAJA. An excellent musical entertainment was provided by a barbershop quartet which included the mellow tones of Ron Cundick one of our hosts. Glade Flake was honored as the Retiredest JAG present.

The year 2004 took RAJA the furthestest north and the furthestest east for any of its long series of meetings. RAJA XXIX, hosted by Dennis and Phyllis Corrigan with the help of Barney and Anita Brannen, was held at the Sheraton Harborside Hotel in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Early arrivals enjoyed spending Friday wandering around the old tourist town of Portsmouth and eating in the various local restaurants specializing in chowder and lobster. On Saturday many took a bus trip to Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, on Lake Winnepausakee where they had an opportunity to board a lake steamer for a tour of the lake and see the mountains.



That evening there was a traditional New England clambake with lobster, shrimp, clams, corn and all the trimmings.

The business meeting was conducted and the timer Rosie Rosenblatt announced the meeting was concluded in five minutes and 45 seconds for a new record. A site selection committee for 2006 was picked consisting of Bill Heaston and whomever he could draft (think Black Hills). The history committee announced that they were still searching for material and asked for any help they can get. Following the business meeting the TJAG, Major General Tom Romig, made his report on the condition of the Corps followed by the new school Commandant, Brigadier General Scott Black, on the situation at Charlottesville. General Black is a first General Officer to command the JAG Center at Charlottesville.

Following the morning meeting a number of foursomes played at the Ledges golf course undeterred by the wind and rain. The ladies had their traditional luncheon and the gentlemen adjourned to a local eating establishment for conversation, fellowship and libations. That evening the traditional banquet was held and the Retiredest award was given to Bob Peckham. It was noted that the senior Judge Advocates present were Howard Levie, age 96, and Jim Booth, age 93. Unfortunately the Judge Advocate General and School Commandant had to return to duty and thus missed the banquet and thus we missed the TJAG twenty five second speech.

## **Epilogue**

Through the years RAJA has served its original purpose of bringing together those members of the Judge Advocate Generals Corps and their spouses who gave a career to the service of the Army as lawyers and soldiers. Your author was once pulled aside at a cocktail party by Joe Haefle who said, "See those guys in there. I used to hate their guts but now I love every one of them. No matter, what, you make sure that this outfit keeps going." And it has. Each year new retirees join and the precedents of the earliest meetings are continued and new precedents are set. Who can forget the magnificent invocations given by Zane Finklestein; the toasts lead by our retired flag officers to the United States. to the President, to the United States Army, to the Corps and by the junior member to the ladies; the ridiculous business of timing of the business meeting; the intense and continuing concern of the members for word of the status of the Corps and the School; the annual moment of silence for our departed comrades; that joy of seeing old friends for the first time in the hospitality suite; the hurry of the golfers to get out on the links; the ladies dressed to the nines for their luncheon; the concern as to who will get the cup as the Retiredest JAG present this year; our pride in having the TJAG come

across country to be with us despite his duties; and most of all the promises to “See you next year.”

Acknowledgments: the author of this work is extremely grateful for the assistance and conversations of RAJA members throughout the United States. I'm sure I will miss some were very helpful but they included Mary Ruth Babbitt, Tom Birch, Jim Booth, Barney Brannen, , Nancy Byers, Henry Capbell, Hugh Clausen, Joe Conboy, Vic Defiori, Zane Finklestein, Cecil Forinash. John Fugh, Bill Fulton, Viviano Gomez, Ken Howard, Howard Husband, Mary Kelso, Jack Kinney, Ed Kurth, Scott Magers, Phil Meengs, Grady Moore, Jim Mundt, Don O'Neill, Bill O'Donovan, Wil Persons, Don Pierce, Art Porcella, George Prugh, Richard Russell, Ed Schmidt, Dick Snyder, Toxey Sewell, Brian Spencer, Bruce Stevenson, Tom Strassburg, Bob Thorniley, Paul Tobin, Steve Werner and Ken Youngblood. In most of these cases the real information came from the spouses for which I was most grateful. What great fun it was to get on the telephone to ask a question and wind up talking old times. Finally I must give great credit to Howard Levie and Len Petkoff and to my wife, Papoose. Without their support this would never have been completed.

### **Addendum by Tim and Linda Naccarato**

RAJA 2005 was determined to be the 30<sup>th</sup> RAJA meeting and was held in Columbus, Georgia. The hosts were Earle & Sally Lasseter and Bob & Stacy Poydasheff. His honor, Bob Poydasheff, was the mayor of Columbus at the time of the meeting. The schedule included a tour of Columbus and the Army Museum at Fort Benning. MG Tom Romig gave the TJAG briefing. BG Scott Black, the School Commandant, spoke to the RAJA members even though he almost did not make the meeting due to bad weather. He arrived very late and the hotel gave away his room. He later found out that the room was given to a new soldier and his bride for their honeymoon, so he figured the room was well utilized that evening. We never discovered where his luggage ended up, so BG Black addressed the meeting in his travel clothes. Fred Chalupsky received the Retiredest award. After 10 years of outstanding service and with thanks from all, Jim Mundt turned over the presidency of RAJA to Tim Naccarato, to be the third president in the history of the organization, following John Jay Douglass' initial 20-year tenure.

RAJA 2006, our 31<sup>st</sup> meeting, was hosted by Bill & Dorris Heaston and John & Nancy Erck in Rapid City, South Dakota. The wonderful tours included Badlands National Park and the Crazy Horse Memorial. Those of us who had never been to the Black Hills before were awed by the beauty and majesty we saw. The banquet was held in the Visitors' Center at the foot of Mt. Rushmore. Our speaker for the

evening helped create Mt. Rushmore as a teenager. However, the most exciting event was the fire alarm at the hotel around 1:15 a.m. While standing in the hotel parking lot, Kevin Carter asked if this was a normal RAJA activity. After registering, Mike Nardotti promptly reported to the local hospital with a mystery ailment. We missed him at the meeting, but were glad that Susan could spend some time with us when she was not at the hospital. Ken Youngblood took home the Retiredest award. It was at this meeting that the RAJA Board decided against giving the hosts a Jefferson Cup as all of us have too many doo-dads. Instead their banquet dinner is covered by RAJA. MG Scott Black gave the TJAG address, and BG Butch Tate briefed on the JAG School.

In 2007, the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual RAJA meeting took place in Scottsdale, Arizona. The hosts, Buzz & Dottie France and John & Nancy Jones, did an exceptional job in planning and organizing the events, especially since neither couple had attended a RAJA gathering before. The events included a tour to Sedona and Red Rock. We stopped enroute to visit Montezuma's Castle, one of the oldest ancient Indian cliff dwellings in the Southwest. The Sedona tour included a trolley ride to the magnificent Chapel in the Rocks. Treasurer Steve Werner reported RAJA had \$27,400 in the treasury. The Board voted to allocate \$2,000 of RAJA funds to the host of each upcoming meeting to reduce expenses for attending members. Ken Howard was voted the most Retiredest at the farewell western cookout. MG Black and BG Tate were on hand for the briefings.

In 2008, the 33<sup>rd</sup> RAJA meeting met in Atlanta, GA at the Embassy Suites Hotel in downtown. Jim & Lois Gerstenlauer, Rob & Bridget Minor along with Dick Snyder and Jim Hatten helping with golf, planned another outstanding RAJA meeting for 131 attendees. Our first stop on the itinerary of tours was the Cyclorama. We were treated to a presentation by a WWII B-17 pilot describing his experiences of being shot down over Munich and spending time in a German POW camp. Our next stop was Mary Mac's Tea Room where both the men and women enjoyed fried green tomatoes, okra, catfish fillets and peach cobbler. After lunch we visited Stone Mountain, the Mount Rushmore of the South. Sunday afternoon was free time. Since we were downtown, we were able to walk to the Aquarium, CNN Center or the Coke Museum (no Pepsi in sight in Atlanta!). Zane Finkelstein provided us with a powerful blessing at the banquet, just like he has done for 33 years. MG Scott Black gave the TJAG address and BG Dana Chipman briefed us on the JAG Legal Center and School. Dick Snyder was recognized as the most Retiredest member. Following the banquet meal, the last order of business is a briefing from next year's host, Dennis Hunt. Little did we know his presentation would include music, costume, beads and a conga line to celebrate going to New Orleans in 2009. RAJA Webmaster, Tom Strassburg, posted a video on the RAJA website.

In 2009, the 34th RAJA meeting with 129 attendees marched into the Big Easy of New Orleans and we stayed at the beautiful Hotel Monteleone in the French Quarter. Our hosts were Dennis and Jeanne Hunt and Mike and Lennard Cramer. They were assisted by Ben Anderson, Tony and Josette Bonfanti, Ron and Linda Howell, and Jim (Rosey) Rosenblatt. The icebreaker featured a local jazz combo (of course) and a breathtaking view of the mighty Mississippi River. The next day our tour took us to a local cemetery, neighborhoods hit by Hurricane Katrina, and Mardi Gras World, where the parade floats are built and stored. The following morning we conducted our business meeting with Lyle Cayce as the official timer. Since we had \$33,000 in the treasury, we advised the members that we would not assess an administrative fee for the next several meetings. Newly promoted to LTG, Scott Black provided his final always humorous and compelling briefing to the members and BG Dana Chipman gave us an entertaining update on the JAG Legal Center and School. As everyone came to expect from the Hunts and Cramers, the banquet on the final evening was beyond festive – featuring the jazz combo, songs by Dr. Michele Cramer Spector, and crazy Mardi Gras hats that all were requested to purchase. John Jay Douglass was recognized as the most Retiredest member. Following dinner, Steve Lancaster briefed all about the 2010 meeting in Indianapolis. The next morning we limped home from New Orleans.

In 2010, the 35th RAJA meeting of 111 attendees motored into the racing capital of the United States – Indianapolis. We stayed at the luxurious Hilton Hotel and Suites downtown. Our hosts were Steve and Pauline Lancaster. The icebreaker took place in a beautiful ballroom, and the pasta buffet was bountiful. At the business meeting the next morning, Dan Dell'Orto and Gerry St. Amand were our official timers – yes, we came in at 9 minutes and 50 seconds. Steve Werner advised that we had \$27,000 in the treasury, so no administrative fee again next year. Our old friend from earlier RAJA meetings, MG Butch Tate, DJAG, filled in for TJAG and the Legal Center and School Commander (they had children graduating from high school) and gave us a highly entertaining briefing. Then it was onto the Indy 500 racetrack for a tour and a 30 mph ride around the race course while imagining cars traveling 230 mph the previous week. At 1730 that evening, Pam Kirby and Barbara Fowler hosted a wonderful and heartfelt reception to thank the members for their support after the passing of their husbands, Bob Kirby and Joe Fowler. Everyone attended. On the final evening the banquet featured a color guard from the Indiana Army National Guard and a member who sang the National Anthem and America the Beautiful. It was our pleasure to have the soldiers seated at various tables and share dinner with us. Darrell Peck was recognized as the most Retiredest member. At the close of dinner, Dave Graham briefed us on the 2011 meeting at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville, Virginia.

In 2011, the 36th RAJA meeting returned to Charlottesville, Virginia, with the largest meeting in RAJA history—220 attendees, plus 25 members of the Retired JAG NCO Association, who also held their annual meeting in Charlottesville. Our hosts were Dave Graham and Fred Borch, with significant assistance from Pat O'Hare and Moe Lescault and several other officers from the JAG Legal Center and School. We paid special tribute to the school Alumni Association for paying for bus transportation and to Tom and Nancy Strassburg for hosting the Virginia Beer and Wine Tasting on Friday. The RAJA Board welcomed Pauline Lancaster as the first spouse to join the Board as a Special Advisor and extended an invitation to Colonel (Ret) Pam Kirby to join the Board and encourage other retired women JAG officers to attend future meetings. She accepted and joined the Board. The Icebreaker was held on Thursday evening in Salon C of the beautiful Omni Hotel. The next morning we boarded buses to the JAG Legal Center and School where the business meeting and GO briefings were held. The timer was Don Curry, and our treasurer, Steve Werner, briefed us that the treasury contained \$23,000—down from \$33,000 four years ago—as we have not been charging an administrative fee in order to lower attendee costs. Going forward, the Board voted to reinstate the admin fee so the treasury stays near \$25,000, a sufficient amount to cover any unforeseen costs. LTG Dana Chipman, TJAG, provided an insightful and entertaining briefing on the Corps and BG John Miller briefed us on the activities at the Legal Center and School. Following the briefings, a picture was taken of all former TJAGs in attendance—Will Persons, Hugh Overholt, Mike Nardotti, Walt Huffman, Tom Romig, and Scott Black. We then toured the School and enjoyed a BBQ lunch. After lunch, we boarded buses to Monticello or Keswick Vineyards and returned to the Omni at 1600. At 1700, Tom and Nancy Strassburg hosted all members at the Main Street Arena near the hotel for a Virginia Beer and Wine Tasting. The highlight (besides the beer and wine) was the attendance of many present and former employees of the School. On Saturday, the golfers teed off at Birdwood at 0900, and the rest of the group boarded buses at 1100 for Keswick Hall where we feasted on a fabulous lunch at this historic and beautiful resort. On the final evening at the banquet, we recognized all WWII RAJA members (Fred Chalupsky, Dick Snyder, Ken Howard, John J. Douglass, and Christine Persons) and we honored Will Persons as the Retiredest member. Will Persons graduated from West Point in 1946, but his wife Christine was already on active duty, so she was included in WWII honorees. The final order of business was a briefing by Mike Marchand on the Fort Worth meeting to be held from June 7-10, 2012, at the Fort Worth Hilton.

### **Addendum by Jim Gerstenlauer**

In 2012, the 37<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Retired Army Judge Advocates was held in Fort Worth, Texas from 7 – 10 June. Mike and Jan Marchand hosted a fabulous event

for the 118 members who attended. The RAJA Board voted to increase annual dues from \$5 to \$10 but decided not to change the \$100 cost of life membership. Tim Naccarato announced that he was completing his tour of duty as the third RAJA President at the conclusion of the Fort Worth meeting. The Board thanked Tim for his years of effective, dedicated service and presented him with a solar powered rotating globe on an inscribed pedestal as a token of its esteem and appreciation. Jim Gerstenlauer succeeded Tim as the RAJA President on 11 June 2012. The icebreaker kicked off in the Grand Crystal Ballroom of the Hilton Hotel and quickly lived up to its reputation with great food and drink, cowboy hats, and a drawing for genuine Texas boots. On Friday morning, Tim Naccarato presided over the business meeting, which included sincere thanks to Mike and Jan Marchand, a treasurer's report of our funds balance of \$17,686.71, and updates on the 2013 meeting in Hawaii and the 2014 meeting in Baltimore. Timer Burris Dale verified that Tim stayed well within the 10-minute meeting limit, completing all business within 9 minutes and 30 seconds. LTG Dana Chipman and BG Tom Ayres then provided the latest updates on the status of our Army, our Corps, and our School. Additional Friday highlights included lunch at the famous Joe T. Garcia's restaurant; a guided bus tour of Fort Worth; a tour of the stockyards culminating with the renowned longhorn cattle drive; and an opportunity to have the manager show us the world's largest honky-tonk, complete with an indoor rodeo ring for live bulls. Saturday events began with either golf or a tour of the infamous Dallas book depository. Following an unscripted lunch and afternoon, the merry band gathered for a happy hour and dinner in the Grand Crystal Ballroom of the hotel. Bill Eckhardt provided grace before dinner in the absence of Zane Finkelstein, who could not attend the meeting for the first time in memory. (We later learned that Zane, our long-time provider of inspiring invocations, passed away on 15 August 2012.) After dinner, Bill Neinast was recognized as the "Most Retiredest" officer in attendance, having retired in 1979; and Joe Conboy and John J. Douglas were recognized for their service in World War II. Mike Chapman presented the golf awards, and Scott Magers invited the members to attend a planned trip to Garmisch, Germany. Karen Werner briefed everyone on the next meeting, to be held in Honolulu, Hawaii, at the Hale Koa Hotel, from 4 – 8 June 2013.

In 2013, the meeting returned to Hawaii for the first time since 1991. The 38<sup>th</sup> RAJA meeting was held in Honolulu from 4 – 8 June. Karen Werner and Mary Chapman hosted an absolutely outstanding meeting at the Hale Koa Hotel for the 98 members who attended. At the RAJA Board meeting, Joe Ross and Mike Chapman presented ideas about how RAJA can reach out to retiring judge advocates and encourage them to join the association. The Board reaffirmed its existing policy that invited guests of RAJA members are always welcome to attend RAJA meetings, but noted that members who invite guests are expected to accompany them to the meeting unless there are extraordinary circumstances. The

Board decided not to expand RAJA membership to include civilian attorneys who served with the Regiment, but agreed that RAJA members are welcome to invite civilian attorneys to attend meetings as their guests. The Aloha spirit filled the Waikiki Room of the Hale Koa when the icebreaker began Tuesday evening. Those who attended were festooned with beautiful leis, which were hand made by Lorraine Kennett and two of her Hawaiian friends. The buffet included typical luau food ranging from poi to pineapple to pulled pork. Following the adjournment of the icebreaker, many reconvened in the beautiful Barefoot Bar located between the pool and the Pacific Ocean. On Wednesday morning the business meeting opened with sincere thanks to Karen Werner, Mary Chapman, and Brian Bush. The treasurer reported a funds balance of \$16,105.49. Timer Denise Vowell certified that the meeting was concluded well within the traditional ten-minute limit. Colonel Mark Bridges, SJA for the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, gave a superb presentation about the Army, the JAG Corps, and the Center and School. He graciously filled in for TJAG and the Commander of TJAGLCS, who were testifying before Congress and presiding over the SJA Course in Charlottesville that week. Additional events on Wednesday included tours of the impressive historic highlights of the Kingdom of Hawaii: Queen Emma's Summer Palace, the Royal Mausoleum (Mauna Ala), Iolani Palace, and the statue of King Kamehameha. Thursday events included the Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, where we reflected on the sacrifices of those comrades in arms who defended our nation against the Japanese surprise attack that brought America into WWII. In fact, in attendance at the meeting was our own Ken Howard, a Navy man in the Pacific Theater in WWII, who saw the sunken Arizona while it rested on the ocean bottom during during the war. From there we went to lunch on the lanai at the Hickam Air Force Base Officers' Club, then on to the Punchbowl National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, and Diamond Head. Friday was a day to explore the island, participate in an optional tour, or golf. The tourists explored the Dole Pineapple Plantation, the North Shore (with lunch at a shrimp truck), Chinaman's Hat Island, and the Ko'olau Mountains. Brian Bush hosted a golf excursion at the Leileihua Golf Course, where the setting was idyllic, the camaraderie was unsurpassed, and, as Brian so aptly stated, it wasn't worth lying to win the available prizes. Friday concluded with an indoor luau featuring live Polynesian entertainment. Our hosts gave each of us an orchid lei to complete our native attire. Bill Eckhardt provided grace before dinner; Phil Meengs was honored as the "Most Retiredest" officer in attendance, having retired in 1983; Ken Howard was recognized for his service in WWII; Sally and Ken Howard were congratulated for the longest marriage, 66 years in August; and Brian Bush presented the golf awards. The live entertainment included not just the Polynesian professionals, but also some of our own talented hula hoofers. Joe Ross, Bill Greene, and Mike Chapman followed that entertainment with an overview of the meeting to be held in Baltimore, Maryland from 5 – 8 June 2014. Madeline

Greene concluded the meeting with a beautiful rendition of the national anthem that was heartily joined by all.

In 2014, the meeting was held in Baltimore, Maryland, from 5 – 8 June. The 137 RAJA members in attendance enjoyed a marvelous and memorable meeting thanks to our hosts: Mike and Mary Chapman, Barbara Fowler, Bill and Madeline Greene, and Henry and Kathy Nolan. At the RAJA Board meeting, Steve Werner reported that 11 new members had joined RAJA since the 2013 meeting. The Board discussed ways to build on this success and encourage even more people to join in the fellowship of RAJA in the coming year. The consensus was that every member should contact his or her retired JAGC friends and associates, and then personally invite them to attend a meeting or join the association. The board members believed that telephone calls and personal meetings would be the most effective ways to contact prospective members. The Board discussed a proposal to pro-rate the registration fee for those members and guests who attended fewer than all of the meeting days or social events but decided to continue its current policy of charging everyone who attends any part of the meeting the same full registration fee regardless of the number of meeting days or events that the member or guest attend. In Baltimore, the location, the food, the weather, the activities, the camaraderie, and the hosts were all simply fantastic. Our hotel was located literally across the street from the Baltimore Harbor and the Harborplace restaurant and shopping area and just a few blocks from the restaurants of Little Italy. The traditional icebreaker again accomplished its mission of building friendships, old and new, in a beautiful setting, with great food, drink, and conviviality. At the business meeting, the treasurer reported a fund balance of \$20,085.93. Timer Mike Hoadley certified that the meeting was concluded well within the traditional ten-minute limit. LTG Flora Darpino, TJAG, and BG Stu Risch, Commanding General of TJAGLCS, graciously provided the latest updates on our Army, our Corps, and our School. They were candid, comprehensive, compelling—and entertaining! Following lunch at the inner harbor's famous Phillips Crab House, we departed on water taxis for Fort McHenry, where our hosts had arranged for us to fold an American flag that measured 30 feet by 42 feet! What a memorable way to help celebrate the 200th anniversary of the composition of our national anthem. Saturday featured golf or a luncheon on the cruise ship, the Spirit of Baltimore. Following an afternoon devoted to R & R, we reconvened in the hotel for the traditional banquet. Bill Eckhardt provided grace before dinner; Jim Mundt was honored as the "Most Retiredest" officer in attendance, having retired in 1981; Darrell and Jane Peck were congratulated for the longest marriage, 61 years in October; and Brian Bush presented the golf awards. Brian and Geri Bush then regaled us with stories of the wild west and an overview of the next meeting, which motivated all in attendance to look forward to our next RAJA extravaganza in Colorado Springs, Colorado from 4 – 7 June 2015.



In 2015, the meeting was held in Colorado Springs, Colorado from 4 – 7 June. Geri and Brian Bush created a special event and lasting memories for the 131 RAJA members and guests who attended. The meeting in Air Force country took off as we gathered to greet friends old and new at the traditional Thursday evening icebreaker, where a new standard was set for bountiful food and fine facilities. The conviviality continued that evening (and other evenings) at the spacious and well-stocked hospitality suite. On Friday morning, we opened our business meeting at 0830 with thanks to our hosts, Geri and Brian Bush, our dedicated webmaster, Tom Strassburg, and our long serving treasurer, Steve Werner. Steve reported that 10 new members had joined RAJA since our 2014 meeting and also reported our account balance had grown to \$24,853.93. Pat Boyle, who lives in Littleton, Colorado and retired in 1979, was recognized for his service in WW II; he was the only WW II veteran at the meeting. Bob Hilmo, our newest member in attendance and esteemed timekeeper for the meeting, certified that the meeting concluded well within the traditional ten-minute limit. The President then read the names of the members who had died since the 2014 Baltimore meeting: John Baker, Joan Brown, Robert Burch, Dave Dowell, John Folawn, Mitch Franks, Bill Fulton, Cathy Goetzke, Joe Hall, Gloria Kaplan, Tom Murdock, Wilt Persons, Terry Raney, Terry Stepp, Fran Wentink, Mack Yawn. We soared through the rest of the meeting with an insightful and inspiring presentation about our Army and our JAG Corps by Major General Tom Ayers, the Deputy Judge Advocate General. MG Ayers is a veteran of Afghanistan and Iraq and has served our nation with distinction. RAJA was indeed fortunate to hear his candid, informative, and entertaining comments about the state of the Army and the JAG Corps and threats that our nation faces. The rest of the day featured lunch at the Air Force Academy Officers Club (where a bored bear brazenly bounced by the dining room window); a tour of the Air Force Academy Chapel, Colorado's number one man-made attraction; a visit to the gorgeous Garden of the Gods, which was made by someone much greater than man; and war stories, old and new, in the hospitality suite. Saturday was a special day well spent at an altitude of 9,500 feet in the historic gold mining town of Cripple Creek, where adventurers had the opportunity to descend into a gold mine or ascend into the mountains on a coal-burning, narrow-gauge train. Following lunch, shopping, and games of chance (for those who felt lucky), we glided into Colorado Springs for the traditional banquet. Bill Eckhardt provided grace before dinner; John Webb was honored as the “Most Retiredest” officer in attendance, having retired in February 1977; John and Kaa Webb were congratulated for the longest marriage, 62 years in May; Brian Bush presented the golf awards; and meeting planning Aces Brian and Geri Bush were thanked and honored with a standing ovation. Ted and Karen Borek ended the evening with tales of the great southwest, where we will hold our next meeting in a luxury resort hotel in beautiful Tucson, Arizona from 2 – 5 June 2016.

In 2016 the 41<sup>st</sup> annual RAJA meeting was held in Tucson, Arizona from 2 – 5 June 2016. In a word, it was spectacular! Ted and Karen Borek and John and Barbara Phelps set a new standard of excellence for our RAJA meeting at the five-star La Paloma Resort and Spa in the great southwestern desert. Our hosts planned once in a lifetime activities for the 141 attendees who braved the triple digit heat to enjoy the company of good friends, old and new. Golfers started the party early on Thursday morning by hitting the links at the course designed by Jack Nicklaus at La Paloma Club. The 0730 start time brought back memories of Army PT, saved the players from heat stroke, and gave even the slowest golfers plenty of time to join us for an exceptional buffet at the traditional opening icebreaker that evening. The president opened the icebreaker by thanking our hosts, Ted and Karen Borek and John and Barbara Phelps, and first time Golf Meister Harry Beans. He then offered a special welcome to RAJA members who were attending a meeting for the first time: Malinda Dunn and Mark Rocke, John and Barbara Phelps, and Mark and Karalee Romaneski. Yes, you read that correctly – John and Barbara helped to plan the very first RAJA meeting that they attended! Talk about an opportunity to excel. The Friday morning business meeting began with a rousing thank you to our hosts and recognition of the first RAJA President, John Jay Douglas. Treasurer Steve Werner informed the members that our treasury has a balance of \$23,393.59 and 12 new members have joined RAJA during the last year, bringing our total membership to 345. The president recognized Steve for his 20 years of service as the RAJA treasurer and presented him with not only gifts of candy and a bottle of wine, but also the promise of a free drink at the RAJA hospitality suite! RAJA members sincerely thank Steve for his two decades of service to RAJA. In accordance with RAJA custom, the president read the names of the following members and friends of RAJA who answered their final roll call since the Colorado meeting: Patrick Barnett, Howard Bushman, Betty Clausen, Ray Cole, Darrell Creekmore, Papoose Douglass, Ken Howard, Jerry Kelly, Jim Kucera, James E. Macklin, Jr., Phil Meengs, Hal Miller, Kenneth Mitchell, Barbara Bergere Nau, Christine Persons, Len Piotrowski, Dick Snyder, and Jeffrey Todd. Following several short announcements by the president, Malinda Dunn, who served as the official timekeeper, reported that the meeting had been conducted in at a mere 9 minutes and 49 seconds, well within the 10 minute meeting limit! BG Chuck Pede, Commanding General of TJAGLCS, then provided a candid, comprehensive, insightful – and entertaining – presentation on the state of the Army and the JAG Corps. It was reassuring to have such a bright, articulate, and battle-tested officer in a position of leadership during a time of great challenges for our Army. We are grateful that he graciously gave his precious time to us not just for the briefing, but also throughout the weekend. His attendance was even more impressive in light of his pending PCS and change of command, which was scheduled to occur in a few weeks. Following lunch at the La Paloma Terrace Patio, most members boarded busses and departed for the Pima County Air and Space Museum, while other members carpooled to the DeGrazia Gallery in the

Sun. Both venues provided an afternoon filled with unique and rewarding experiences. We returned to the hotel for a “free” evening for dinner, grad course reunions, and, of course, the hospitality suite. At 0715 on Saturday morning our intrepid members boarded buses and set forth for the world famous Sonora Desert Museum. When leaving his room, Bill Kirk came across a rattlesnake outside the door of his hotel room, did a quick Tucson two-step around his venomous visitor, and had the reptile removed by the helpful hotel staff. Bill definitely earned a place in the lore of the corps for his showdown with that lowdown rattler – and he made it to the bus on time! The drive through the colorful southwestern desert was magnificent and by itself could have made the day worthwhile. The museum and the outdoor hiking area just added to the majesty of the experience. We returned to the hotel in time to enjoy the spa, nearby art shops, tennis, or a good old nap before heading to the happy hour at 1800 hours. The traditional banquet, a western theme dinner complete with RAJA members dressed as cowboys and cowgirls, started with the president thanking Ted and Karen Borek and John and Barbara Phelps for planning and hosting a superb event. Following the traditional opening with the pledge of allegiance to the flag and a series of toasts, Bill Eckhardt led us in the invocation, and the meal was served. The awards ceremony began with golf awards presented by Brian Bush. Next up was the “Most Retiredest Award.” For the first time in 41 years, there was a tie, and two RAJA members were recognized for this achievement – both Gordon Denison and Bill Heaston retired on 31 May 1986 and have enjoyed 30+ years of Army retirement! The “Most Marriedest Award” went to Bob and Jeanne Commeau for 59 years of marriage. In another unique Tucson twist, the Commeaus were married in 1957 on 4 June – the same day that they earned the coveted Most Marriedest Award! And then, to top off the awards banquet, John Jay Douglas was honored for his many achievements, including being a founding member and 25-year president of RAJA. Ted Borek presented a specially designed tribute poster that had been signed by all of the RAJA members in attendance. The evening concluded with a presentation by the dynamic duo of Pam Kirby and Barbara Fowler, both dressed as Mouseketeers, about the 2017 meeting at the Shades of Green Armed Forces Recreation Center hotel in Orlando, Florida. Tucson will be remembered as the “Five-Star RAJA Meeting.” It was held at a five-star hotel and resort, featured five-star attractions and events, and was planned by five-star hosts – Ted and Karen Borek and John and Barbara Phelps. We thank them for the five-star experiences and five-star memories that they provided the fortunate RAJA members who attended.

In 2017, the meeting was held in Orlando, Florida from 4 – 7 May at Shades of Green in the land of Mickey and Minnie. Pam Kirby and Barbara Fowler planned every detail to perfection—including the weather. The wisdom of scheduling this meeting in early May was convincingly confirmed by blue skies, temperatures in the 70s, and amusement parks that were busy but not overcrowded. The icebreaker

on Thursday evening featured a full buffet, seating for everyone, and the joy of seeing friends, old and new; Golf Czar Allan Toomey hosted the best golf tournament ever on a course that featured wild turkeys, egrets, alligators, and palm trees; and hospitality suite hosts Tom and Diane McShane set a new standard of fun and frivolity. Instead of structured tours, this meeting featured free time to explore, sit by the pool, or try to keep up with children and grandchildren at the parks. BG Paul Wilson, Commanding General of TJAGLCS, provided a candid and thought-provoking presentation on the state of the Army, the JAG Corps, and the recent major changes to the UCMJ. This was not your ordinary briefing—BG Wilson answered questions about the toughest issues in a thoughtful, balanced, and direct manner. Not only is this a bright, articulate, and battle-tested officer, he is also an inspiring leader and person of great integrity. We are grateful that he graciously shared his precious time with us not just for the briefing, but also at the icebreaker and banquet. On Friday morning, we opened our business meeting at 0830 with thanks to our hosts, Pam Kirby and Barbara Fowler, our dedicated webmaster, Tom Strassburg, and our long-serving treasurer, Steve Werner. Steve reported that 11 new members had joined RAJA since our 2016 meeting and also reported our account balance had grown to \$28,131.21. Dale Woodling, our newest member in attendance and esteemed timekeeper for the meeting, certified that the meeting concluded well within the traditional ten-minute limit. The President then read the names of the members and friends who had answered their final roll call since the 2016 Tucson meeting: Ada Bahamonde, Elliot Clark, Bob Clark, Jack Crouchet, Byrd Eastham, Jim Endicott, Bob Handcox, Jennie Miller, Randy Parker, and Noble Towsey. The traditional banquet was held on Saturday night in the Shades of Green ballroom. Playing in the background for everyone's enjoyment was Steve Smith's slideshow featuring thirty years of photographs of JAGs in Germany. Bill Eckhardt provided grace before dinner; Burnie Radosh was honored as the "Most Retiredest" officer in attendance, having retired on 30 June 1980; Tony and Josette Bonfanti were congratulated for the longest marriage, 60 years in September 2017; Al Toomey presented the golf awards; and meeting hosts Barbara Fowler and Pam Kirby were thanked for an outstanding meeting. Roger and Barbara Neds ended the evening with scenes of Savannah, Georgia where we will hold our next meeting in the Savannah Marriott Riverfront from 31 May – 3 June 2018.

In 2018, the meeting was held in Savannah, Georgia. It was simply superb! Roger and Barbara Neds set a new standard of Southern charm and hospitality for the 156 members who sojourned to Savannah for the 43<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Retired Army Judge Advocates Association from 31 May through 3 June 2018. Jeff and Devon Arnold added to the spirit of hospitality with a special gift for everyone in attendance – a JAG crest capped jar of rare and delicious honey made from the blossoms of Georgia white Ogeechee tupelo trees. Sweet! Golf Czar Al Toomey teed up the Thursday events with an early morning golf tournament on the marsh-

laced links at the Landings Club, where a good time was had by all. Meanwhile, Barbara Neds shared her recipe for fun with the early arriving RAJA members by hosting a mid-morning, hands-on cooking class at The Kitchen Chef. The setting overlooking the Savannah River was perfect for the Thursday evening icebreaker, where friendships were created and renewed. This year there were twelve members attending their first RAJA meeting, including Ken and Theresa Allen, David and Lindalu Barber, Brian and Suzanne Godard, Jill Grant, Julie Hasdorff and John Convery, Lisa Schenck, and Mark and Colleen Zanin. Several of these first time attendees led the way to the hospitality suite, where party hosts Larry and Beverly Rouse and Rob and Bridget Minor continued the conviviality. The first order of business at the Friday morning meeting was to thank our hosts, Barbara and Roger Neds for planning this outstanding meeting. Treasurer Steve Werner presented his 23<sup>rd</sup> and final report as the RAJA treasurer, informing the members that the RAJA account balance was \$31,739 and the membership includes 326 Life Members. The President then read the names of the members and friends who had answered their final roll call since the 2017 Orlando meeting: Bill Bartee, Pat Boyle, Joe Conboy, Chrissy Ekman, Russ Fontenot, Bill Gibbes, Gene Hood, Nathaniel Kenyon, Talbot J. Nicholas, Jane O'Donovan, Robert Smith, Jay Thoman, Bob Wallace, Bill Wallis, Togo West, and Paul Zeigler. This year there was more than business as usual at the traditional Friday morning business meeting. As required by Florida law or the articles of incorporation, members adopted a new quorum requirement for the bylaws, set the number of directors at eleven, and elected the directors for the coming year. The directors are: Geri Bush (Secretary and Treasurer), Mike Chapman (Vice President), Jim Gerstenlauer (President), Bill Heaston, Pam Kirby, Pauline Lancaster, Jim Mundt, Tim Naccarato, Joe Ross, Tom Strassburg, Steve Werner. Timekeeper Lisa Schenck assured us that all of this business and more was completed in 9 minutes and 58 seconds – well within the traditional ten-minute limit for RAJA business meetings! RAJA member extraordinaire and Regimental Historian Fred Borch filled in for TJAG, whose flight was rescheduled due to bad weather, and provided a briefing about the state of the JAG Regiment and the Army. Members left the presentation for a luncheon, and then had free time to explore the city before boarding a riverboat cruise along Savannah's historic waterfront. The day concluded with a Savannah ghost tour. Saturday started with a trolley tour of Savannah and was a day to explore the city's Spanish moss draped squares, shopping districts, and historical sites. It ended with the traditional RAJA banquet. Del and Jane O'Roark, who had been married for 59 years, received the award for the "most marriedest" couple; and Bill Heaston, who retired in May 1986, received the "most retiredest" award. The highlight of the evening was the clear, complete, and compelling overview of the state of our Army and our Regiment by TJAG. Scott Black concluded the banquet with a presentation about the Las Vegas, Nevada meeting that will be held 2 – 5 May 2019. Assisting Scott and Kim Black with the Vegas meeting are Mike and Lorraine Kennett and Wayne Price.

During the meeting of the Board of Directors and at the banquet on Saturday, we honored the decades of outstanding, selfless, dedicated, uncompensated service of Directors Fred Green and Steve Werner. Fred Green concluded over 19 years of service on the Board of Directors, and Steve Werner, who will remain on the Board, concluded over 23 years as the RAJA Treasurer and Secretary. Over the past year, Directors Tom Strassburg and Pam Kirby researched and wrote the first major revision of the RAJA bylaws since the inception of the organization in 1975.

In 2019 the meeting was held in Las Vegas, Nevada. What happened to RAJA members in Vegas ... was simply too good to stay in Vegas! Scott and Kim Black, Mike and Lorraine Kennett, and Wayne Price put together a winning combination of fun, food, and fellowship that set a new standard of excellence for the 136 members who attended the 44<sup>th</sup> annual RAJA meeting at the Flamingo Hotel in the heart of the Vegas Strip. Golf Czar Al Toomey again teed up the Thursday events with an early morning golf tournament on the Concord Course at the Revere Golf Club. Talk about a sand trap – the entire course is surrounded by the beautiful Nevada desert. Meanwhile, back at the Flamingo, a group of explorers set off on a walking tour of Las Vegas Boulevard, the Linq, and the Bellagio Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. The Thursday night icebreaker marked the traditional start of the festivities in the city that never sleeps. Fond friendships were made and renewed over great food, libation, and conversation. This year there were eight members attending their first RAJA meeting, including Jeff and Teresa Addicott, Jose and Barbara Aguirre, Dean Eveland and Lynn Siegfried, and Bill and June Jones. Several of these first time attendees led the way to the hospitality suite, where Wayne Price, Mister Hospitality, continued the conviviality well into the next day. The Friday morning business meeting began with the president thanking our hosts, Scott and Kim Black, Mike and Lorraine Kennett, and Wayne Price, for planning a fabulous meeting. Geri Bush presented her first report to the members as the RAJA Treasurer, informing us that RAJA has a strong financial footing with \$31,992.41 in financial assets. The president then read the names of the members and friends who had answered their final roll call since the 2018 meeting in Savannah: Bill Adams, Rex Bragaw, Bob Byers, Mike Carmichael, John Caulking, Joe Creekmore, John Jay Douglass, Babs Downes, Howard Eggers, Vincent Faggioli, Pat Finnegan, Frank Gindhart, Dick Hawley, Dave Hennessey, John Naughton, Rob Nutt. The next order of business was the election of RAJA directors. The members unanimously elected the following 11 directors for the next year: Geri Bush (Secretary and Treasurer); Mike Chapman (Vice President); Jim Gerstenlauer (President); Bill Heaston; Pam Kirby; Pauline Lancaster; Jim Mundt; Tim Naccarato; Joe Ross; Tom Strassburg; Steve Werner. The president then recognized Gil and Marion Fegley, who provided a brief update on the care package project for soldiers stationed in Afghanistan and thanked RAJA members for their past support. The president then highlighted the JAG Connector email

that was produced by the OTJAG Strategic Communications staff and encouraged all RAJA members to sign up for the email. He thanked the OTJAG staff for this outreach to the retired JAG community. As the final business of the meeting, Jim Gerstenlauer mentioned that Tom and Nancy Strassburg, Butch and Lynn Tate, and Bill Kirk had to cancel plans to attend the meeting and would be greatly missed. The 2019 certified official timekeeper, Jose Aguirre, reported that the Friday morning business meeting was easily completed in a total time of a mere 9 minutes and 57 seconds, well within the traditional ten-minute time limit for RAJA business meetings. RAJA members were then treated to inspiring and informative presentations by LTG Charles N. Pede, The Judge Advocate General, and BG Marilyn S. Chiafullo, Commanding General of the USAR Legal Command. After lunch the RAJA consiglieres boarded buses bound for the Mob Museum. There, in a repurposed courthouse, we witnessed the story of prohibition and the rise and fall of organized crime across the nation, including Las Vegas. Certain criminal elements in our group conspired to conclude the tour in a secret room hidden behind a six-foot painting in a basement speakeasy, where the moonshine flowed. Friday night was free for friends to see the shows that bring the stars to the Strip; fine dining; grad course reunions; and the occasional game of chance. While some enjoyed the glamour and glitz of the city, Mr. Hospitality hosted others in the suite named in his honor to end the perfect evening. The tour of the Hoover Dam, power plant, and bridge, along with shopping and lunch in Boulder City provided a special activity for Saturday. Those who attended could not have been more impressed by this miraculous engineering feat that literally transformed the desert. And – the camaraderie everyone experienced on the buses and during the tour could not have been better. The day's activities concluded with the traditional RAJA banquet featuring more great food and a spirited awards presentation. In addition to naming Bob Comeau as the "Most Retiredest" officer in attendance, having retired in August, 1987, the president recognized Dennis and Livvy Coupe as the "Most Marriedest" couple in attendance, having exchanged their vows in September, 1964. Dave and Daly Schreck were close runners up, with a January 1965 wedding, and Janet and Scott Magers narrowly edged out Ken and Carolyn Gray by getting hitched in July instead of August 1966. And, in a first for RAJA, John Harvey, former Director of Army Legal Services for Australia, was named as an Honorary RAJA Member. Bill and Dorris Heaston, the people who brought us a memorable meeting in Rapid City, South Dakota in 2006, and Jim and Carolyn Smith, who will ably assist them, concluded the banquet with a presentation about "Operation Omaha," the 28 – 31 May 2020 meeting scheduled for Omaha, Nebraska. RAJA adjourned its 2019 meeting by thanking our hosts and encouraging members to enjoy the Vegas nightlife or continue the camaraderie in the hospitality suite.

Following the Las Vegas meeting, Bill and Dorris Heaston and Jim and Carolyn Smith continued to make arrangements for the Omaha meeting. Tragically, in July 2019, Bill Heaston, who had volunteered to host the annual meeting in Omaha and had enthusiastically briefed members about it during the banquet in Las Vegas, was diagnosed with an inoperable, stage 4 brain tumor and began a regimen of occupational, physical, and chemotherapy. Bill fought valiantly and did all that could be done, but lost his battle with the disease and entered into rest on 24 February 2020. Dorris Heaston, Carolyn Smith, and Jim Smith continued the meeting preparations. They planned the meeting and activities, signed the hotel and excursion contracts, and completed arrangements with OTJAG.

Unfortunately, by late February – early March it became apparent that there was an evolving, serious health risk being posed by the coronavirus pandemic. The RAJA Board of Directors decided to monitor developments, gather information, and consider the implications for the Omaha meeting. The primary concern was the health of RAJA members, many, if not most, of whom are at higher than normal risk of adverse consequences from the virus due to age and/or medical conditions. On 28 March 2020, the RAJA Board of Directors and the Omaha meeting hosts met and unanimously voted to cancel the Omaha meeting. Members were informed of the decision that same day by email, asked to cancel hotel reservations, and informed that full refunds for the meeting registration would be provided. On 29 March 2020, the president informed the hotel management of the Board's decision not to hold the meeting in light of the declared coronavirus pandemic, invoked the Force Majeure clause of the contract with the hotel, released the hotel from its contractual obligations, and terminated the contract. This is the first time in the history of RAJA that an annual meeting has been canceled. The hosts, Dorris Heaston, Carolyn Smith, and Jim Smith not only did everything they could do to create a magnificent time for us in Omaha, but also had to undo it all by gracefully exiting contracts, retrieving deposits, providing refunds to members, and maintaining goodwill in the community. As a result of their extensive efforts and the "Nebraska nice" responses of all involved, RAJA retrieved all conference funds. The Board of Directors decided that the extraordinary efforts of the three RAJA hosts and Bill Heaston, who volunteered to host the meeting and did all that he could to help plan it, deserved the special recognition of a resolution that was posted to the public RAJA website and is filed in the archives of the secretary. The Board members met on 25 April 2020 to conduct required business, including the election of the following new officers: Mike Chapman, President; Pam Kirby, Vice President; and Geri Bush, Secretary/Treasurer. The Board also decided that due to the travel and in-person meeting restrictions related to the pandemic, the annual meeting would be held on 30 May 2020 in the Atlanta home of the outgoing president. Members were notified of the meeting, which was held as scheduled, and the following directors were elected to serve until the next annual meeting in 2021: Mike Chapman, President; Pam Kirby, Vice President; Geri Bush, Secretary-Treasurer; Gil Fegley;



Jim Gerstenlauer; Pauline Lancaster; Tim Naccarato; Joe Ross; Lisa Schenck; Tom Strassburg; and Steve Werner. Gil Fegley and Lisa Schenck succeed Bill Heaston and Jim Mundt. Mike Chapman succeeds Jim Gerstenlauer as the RAJA President, and Pam Kirby succeeds Mike Chapman as the RAJA Vice President. Because the RAJA meeting could not be held in person in Omaha, we were not able to follow our custom and tradition of reading aloud the names of those RAJA members and friends of RAJA whose final roll call occurred after the 2019 meeting in Las Vegas. In an effort to honor those individuals, President Jim Gerstenlauer sent an email to all RAJA members on Memorial Day, 25 May 2020. He asked every member to read the names and, in his or her own way, to honor the memory of the following departed friends: Ken Allen, Gary Anderson, Jean Baker; Pat Carter; Walt Cybart; Charlie French; Jim Gleason; Barbara Graves; Bill Heaston; Tom Kullman; Dwight Lanford; Bill Lantz; Mike Lewis; Ralph Lurker; Howard Metcalf; Jean Mundt; Joe Rehyansky; Dan Shimek; Roxie Steinberg. In fall of 2020 the RAJA Board of Directors decided that because most members would probably not feel safe traveling and gathering in spring of 2021, the planned meeting in Charlottesville would be rescheduled for June 2022.

After canceling the 2020 meeting in Omaha and postponing the 2021 meeting in Charlottesville because of COVID-19 pandemic concerns, RAJA members finally gathered at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville, Virginia, from 2 – 5 June 2022, for the 46<sup>th</sup> annual meeting. Over 210 members and guests attended the second largest RAJA event ever held. Our hosts, Steve and Pauline Lancaster, along with Tom and Nancy Strassburg, planned an exciting and enjoyable schedule of events that began on Thursday, 2 June, with a golf outing at the Charlottesville Municipal Meadowcreek Golf Course. Led and organized by our golf czar, Al Toomey, forty golfers enjoyed a beautiful morning of golf and fellowship. Non-golfers were given the opportunity to join a guided tour of Montpelier, James and Dolley Madison's estate outside of Charlottesville. The traditional RAJA icebreaker was held in the Omni ballroom on the evening of 2 June. Mike Chapman, RAJA President, welcomed all attendees and gave a special welcome to thirteen new attendees: Jim Baker, Ray Bily, Lou Durnya, Jeff Elliott, J. Mackey Ives, Nick Lancaster, Claes Lewenhaupt, Bill Lynch, Chris Maher, James McAtamney, Jack Nevin, Dave Schlueter, and Albert Veldhuyzen. Friday began with one of the highlights of any visit to Charlottesville, a tour of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. After the morning at Monticello, members enjoyed a wonderful buffet lunch at the Three Notch'd Craft Kitchen and Brewery in downtown Charlottesville. On Friday evening RAJA members also had a unique opportunity to socialize with retired JAG NCOs attending the meeting of The Judge Advocate General's Association of Legal Paraprofessionals (JAGALP) who were having their own reunion in Charlottesville. Mike Chapman was invited to speak to JAGALP members at a session on Friday morning. Mike talked about the origin of RAJA, its membership, its annual meetings, and how RAJA is organized and administered.

RAJA attendees met for the annual business meeting in the Omni Hotel ballroom on Saturday morning, 4 June. Mike Chapman read the names of all deceased members and spouses who passed away since our last meeting. He also noted that one of our deceased members, Bill Kirk, was a flag collector and donated two JAG flags to RAJA. Sitting RAJA board members were reelected, but Joe Ross stepped down and was replaced by Chuck Pede. Marion Fegley introduced Liz Runjas from the DC JAG Club. Liz thanked RAJA members for their financial support of the Club's effort to supply care packages to deployed JAGs. After the business meeting, BG Alison Martin, the Commanding General of the Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School presented the State of the JAG Corps in lieu of The Judge Advocate General, LTG Stuart Risch, who had to cancel his presentation due to COVID-19. Later that day, faculty members from the Legal Center and School provided tours of the School to RAJA members. Saturday's activities concluded with the traditional RAJA banquet. When dinner was over, Al Toomey presented the results of the golf outing. Pam Kirby recognized Darrell and Jane Peck as the "Most Marriedest" couple among the attendees. Darrell was also the "Most Retiredest" officer in attendance. Bob and Jeanne Comeau were also recognized for their 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary that fell on the day of the banquet, 4 June. The evening ended with the appearance of a special guest, Pappy Chappy, from Possum Hollow, Tennessee (played by Mike Chapman). Pappy spoke to the attendees about the following year's RAJA meeting scheduled for Nashville, Tennessee, from 1 to 4 June 2023.

Approximately 130 attendees met in Nashville, Tennessee, on 1 – 4 June 2023, for the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual RAJA Meeting. We stayed at the lovely Drury Plaza Hotel in downtown Nashville, just blocks away from the famous Broadway and other iconic attractions. Broadway is a major downtown entertainment district renowned for honky tonks and live country music. Our hosts, Joe and Donna Ross, with the help of their daughter, Sara Towne, along with Mike and Mary Chapman planned an enjoyable schedule of events for the group. Gil and Marion Fegley set up and managed the hospitality suite. While some members enjoyed a morning of golf at the Presidents Reserve Course, located at the Hermitage Golf Course, on Thursday, 1 June, others toured the Country Music Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame tells the story of country music and honors all the greats of this unique American performance art. That evening, Mike Chapman, President of RAJA, hosted a welcome icebreaker at the Hotel. A special welcome went out to five new members attending their first RAJA meeting: Jim Frees and his wife Pam; Steph Browne; Lauren Lecker; Donna Wright; and Denise Lind. The next morning, attendees met for the annual business meeting in the hotel ballroom. Per tradition, Jim Frees, RAJA's newest member, was made the official timekeeper. After Mike Chapman reviewed the upcoming activities and Geri Bush gave the Treasurer's report, Mike read the names of those JAGC and family members who passed away since our last meeting in Charlottesville: George Barrett; Murray

Baxter; Marsha Hansen; Monty Hougen; Craig Jacobsen; Robert Magnuson; Joseph Russell; Rosemary Russell; Pit Scheff; Allen Haim; Bob Murray; John Ley; and Frank Melton. As required by RAJA bylaws, Board members were elected for one-year terms. The following members were elected: Mike Chapman, President; Gil Fegley, Vice-President; Geri Bush, Secretary/Treasurer; and board members Steve Werner; Tom Strassburg; Tim Naccarato; Jim Gersternlauer; Pauline Lancaster; Pam Kirby; Lisa Schenck; and Chuck Pede. After the business meeting, Mike introduced the guest speaker, LTG Stuart W. Risch, the 41<sup>st</sup> Judge Advocate General of the Army. LTG Risch spoke to the members about the state of the Corps, its leadership team, their priorities, and challenges facing our Corps and the Army. Also discussed were changes in military justice and the impact those changes will have on the military justice system and the JAG Corps. That afternoon, activities for our members included a tour of the city while riding the Old Town Trolley. Stops included the Ryman Auditorium, The Capital View, the Marathon Motor Works, Centennial Park, the Belmont Mansion, and the First Art Museum. Many of our members took a guided tour of the iconic Ryman Auditorium, the “Cathedral of Country Music”. Saturday’s events included a chartered bus trip to The Hermitage, Home of Andrew Jackson, our seventh President. Docent-guided tours of the mansion and grounds followed lunch, as well as a video presentation about The Hermitage and Andrew Jackson. The 47<sup>th</sup> Annual RAJA meeting concluded with the traditional RAJA banquet on Saturday evening. After toasts, a special guest, McKenna Hall, niece of Steve and Pauline Lancaster, sang our National Anthem. Prior to dinner, Bill Eckhardt gave the invocation. Later in the evening, McKenna led members in singing God Bless America. Jim Mundt was recognized as the longest retired member in attendance and for attending the most RAJA meetings. Richard and Linda Russell were the longest married couple. It was indeed an honor to have LTG Risch and his wife, Cindy, take time out of their busy schedules to join us in many of our activities over the weekend. Following dinner, Jim and Tanna Schmidli, hosts for our next RAJA meeting in Branson, Missouri, talked about the many attractions Branson has to offer.

From 30 May to 2 June 2024, almost ninety attendees met in Branson, Missouri, for the 48<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Retired Army Judge Advocates Association (RAJA). The beautiful heart of the Ozarks was a splendid location for our reunion. Branson is a top-25 U.S. tourist destination and the Hilton Hotel and Convention Center in downtown Branson was most accommodating to our needs. Our hosts, Jim and Tanna Schmidli, planned an enjoyable itinerary for the attendees. On Thursday morning, the Society of RAJA golfers, organized by Al Toomey, enjoyed a round of golf at the Ledgestone Golf Course. Ledgestone is a beautiful mountain course located near Branson. As an alternative to golf, some of our members boarded the Branson Scenic Railway for a two-hour ride on the rails. Others enjoyed shopping at the Branson Landing pedestrian walking area, a

beautiful 95-acre retail and entertainment destination located a few blocks from our hotel. That evening, Mike Chapman, President of RAJA, welcomed all attendees at an icebreaker in the Convention Center. On Friday morning, buses took our members a few miles south of Branson to Hollister, Missouri, to the Top of the Rock Lost Canyon Cave and Nature Trail. Members thoroughly enjoyed a 2.5 mile self-driving electric golf cart ride along a scenic trail of stunning rock formations, waterfalls, picturesque overlooks, and views of Table Rock Lake. After lunch at the Indian Artifact Wine Tasting Room, attendees were free to explore the Ancient Ozarks National History Museum. The Museum brought onlookers face-to-face with amazing prehistoric dioramas, Civil War and American West relics, fine art, and one of the most significant collection of Native American artifacts ever assembled. The annual business meeting started on Saturday morning in the Convention Center, with coffee, tea, juice, fruit, and pastries. After the Treasurer's report, the election of Board of Directors commenced. RAJA Bylaws require the election of Board Members each year for a one-year term. Reelected were nine current Board members: Jim Schmidli and Barbara Fowler were nominated to succeed Tim Naccarato and Pamela Kirby and were also elected to join the Board. Mike Chapman read the names of those JAGC and family members who passed away since our last meeting in Nashville. Unable to attend in person, LTG Stuart Risch, the 41st Judge Advocate General of the Army, talked via Zoom to the attendees. General Risch spoke of challenges facing our Corps and the Army, the new JAGC leadership team, and the state of the Corps. Saturday afternoon, RAJA attendees enjoyed a wonderful lunch and a great onboard show while cruising Table Rock Lake aboard the Branson Belle Showboat. The weekend activities concluded with a banquet in the Convention Center on Saturday evening. Members of the Missouri Army National Guard Color Guard presented the Colors, followed by the singing of the National Anthem by guest, Nicole Sterling. Colonel Kevin Hillman, Missouri Army National Guard Judge Advocate, was a special guest. Bill Eckhardt gave the invocation. After dinner, Phyllis Corrigan, host for our next meeting in Portland, Maine, talked about next year's annual meeting.