

Silver Spur Reunion 2021  
21-24 April, Branson, Missouri  
After Action Report

The Radisson Hotel hosted our reunion in Branson, our first held in three years. The China Virus forced us to cancel in 2020. The Radisson is in the heart of the Branson show district, and also adjacent to many restaurants and bars, many of which have reopened. The hotel restaurant, on the other hand, was open only for breakfast except on weekends. Their bar was also open only on Fridays and Saturdays. Silver Spurs enjoyed complimentary breakfast coupons for every night booked in the hotel, and we arranged a portable bar for most events. Our miniature framed guidon remains mounted in the hotel basement display hallway, near the Sales Office.

Because of the uncertainty of pandemic restrictions during planning of this reunion, no group events or shows were planned outside the hotel. Not all Branson shows have reopened. We enjoyed a private hospitality room the entire time, and all events were held there. Most attendees scheduled and attended various Branson shows on their own. Branson and our hotel had lifted mask restrictions the week before we arrived, although many shows and businesses still required face coverings for entry.

In past years, we rode the Ducks, WW II amphibious trucks, on a route around the city and a swim through the lake. They are out of business after a tragic accident that drowned several passengers since we last took the trip in 2016.

Most arrivals came into town Wednesday, 21 April. About 50 attendees were expected, but only 32 appeared, and not all could stay for everything. For the first time in our reunion history, no former commanders were able to attend. Time marches on for all of us, and health and COVID considerations precluded attendance by several. And our president, John Waldo Pepper, was scheduled for surgery during the reunion. We understand he is recovering.

Our first gathering, a welcome reception, occurred Wednesday evening and gave all arrivals a chance to renew friendships and make new ones. We were glad to welcome Victor Hernandez and his wife, Cathey, who attended their first reunion. We hope it will not be their last.

On Thursday morning, Chuck Oualline conducted a Memorial Ceremony for our fallen and missing comrades. This time, the ceremony was normal and uneventful. In 2016, a fire alarm interrupted. In 2018, Chuck nearly passed out and thought he was having a heart attack (he wasn't, and it was not serious).

A Missing Man Table was set up in our meeting room, and Chuck first gave an explanation of the meaning of all items on the table. Bill McCalister led all in the Pledge of Allegiance, and Chuck read the names and dates of passing, if known, of the 16 men we have lost since the last reunion, or of whose passing we were not aware during the last reunion. Next came the actual Memorial Ceremony, when the names of our KIAs were

read during a DVD presentation, professionally produced by John Pepper. Our fallen include one whose remains may have been returned from Cambodia, but who has not been identified (Gregory Antunano). We included the four KIAs suffered by the present-day Silver Spurs during a tour in Iraq, The ceremony concluded with the playing of Taps with the troop at Present Arms. Thanks to Clayton Marsh for his technical assistance with playing the DVD.

Our business meeting was held on Friday morning, conducted by Bill McCalister, quite informally. Because of sparse attendance and absence of the president and vice president, we did not hold any elections. Charles Stutzman agreed to continue serving as Membership Committee Chairman. Clayton Marsh also volunteered to continue the task of forwarding mass e-mails to our members. Roger “Bear” Young remains our volunteer Webmaster, of course, since he could not be present this year to defend himself. The same is true for President Pepper and Vice President Hennessey. Roger’s website is invaluable in attracting troopers lost to us for many years, and in keeping all of us informed. Bill McCalister has agreed to remain the Reunion Chairman and Chuck Oualline agreed to assist him. Bill is also our Treasurer.

Future reunion timing and possible locations were discussed. The prevailing opinion is that we should begin meeting yearly, not every second year. No decisions have been made, but the prevalent discussion was for a reunion in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in May of 2022. Bill plans a recon there in the near future.

We met again at 1700 on Saturday for cocktails in our private meeting room at the hotel. The Missing Man Table again greeted Spurs as they entered. Bill McCalister welcomed all and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Ed Roffe led us in prayer to bless the food. Chuck Oualline again gave an explanation of the Missing Man Table, and we toasted our fallen and missing. Al LaGrange delivered a moving tribute to all of us Silver Spurs. Then dinner was served.

Bill McCalister should be commended for all his very hard work as the Reunion Committee Chairman, while also acting as the unit’s Treasurer and paying the bills. Roger Young, our webmaster, is a member who spends countless hours on his outstanding website to update all the reunion information and to keep track of our losses.

Most of us departed on Sunday, 25 April 2021. We had renewed old friendships and forged some new ones. We hope that our brothers from other troops and from the 575<sup>th</sup> will return to future reunions and bring others. I said this in previous after action reports: It is sad to think that all of us might not be around for the next reunion in 2022. I pray it is not so. But reality and age tell me that it is likely. Each time we meet could be our last. So, don’t blow off the next reunion. Don’t put off attendance until the one after that. Be there. For each other. And for loads of fun, just like old times.

Chuck Oualline  
2021/2022 Reunion Committee