

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER XXVIII

2022 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES

July 10, 2022 1000 (all times MST)

Helena, Montana

In accordance with Article XI, Section II of the Special Forces Association Devil's Brigade Chapter Constitution, the President called the Meeting to order. The following officers were present: Max Carpenter, President; Don Bratsch, Vice President; Shawn Modula, Secretary; Bob Brugh, Treasurer; and those 23 total association members in attendance including officers.

These minutes are a brief summary of the discussions and actions at the meeting. The Secretary has added some background information to a few items that was not actually discussed for clarity and context.

AGENDA:

- 1) **Constitutional Change on Term of President:** Max led the discussion about the need to change the term of offices/president from two years to four. The officers recommended that the President would be limited to 2 terms for a total of 8 years but the other officers would not be subject to term limits.

The officers recommended the changes due to lack of interest among members in running for leadership positions. Term limits help protect the chapter against leadership stagnation and possible misuse of positions. Term limiting the President seems like the best compromise to protect the chapter while avoiding empty leadership positions that we can't fill due to term limits. Bob made it clear that just because the other positions are not term limited does not mean those officers cannot be voted out. Other candidates are encouraged to run for those positions.

There was a motion and second to shift the current term to align chapter elections with the US Presidential Elections cycle and term limit the President after two 4 year terms while not term limiting the other officers. The next chapter elections for all officers will be on Election Day (November 5th, 2024). If Max wins another term, he will be term limited out and ineligible to run again in 2027. *The motion passed 23 for, 0 against.*

- 2) **Voting :** Shawn recommended that *voting for officers and critical chapter actions should be conducted by electronic means moving forward.* Past votes have been managed by a non-officer member to ensure objectivity in conducting elections and votes. Survey technologies such as Survey Monkey now make it easy to conduct and tally votes with complete transparency. Online meetings are common and inexpensive. In general the chapter and members will be better served conducting most business

electronically. The members present agreed and there was a motion and second to conduct all chapter elections and votes electronically. *The motion passed 23 for, 0 against.*

- 3) **Accounting to be overseen by JCCS CPA Regional Accounting.** Bob led the discussion about retaining JCCS CPA as an accounting firm to augment the Treasurer. The chapter leadership has concluded that we need the ability to pay invoices and generate financial statements if the Treasurer is unavailable or incapacitated. JCCS offers a range of services including paying invoices and financial reporting. Appendix Item 1 is the scope of services we are contracting JCCS to provide. Many potential donors require independent, timely financial statements so JCCS will allow us to improve performance in those areas. An added benefit is they can move all of our records online so anyone with authorization has immediate access to our account records.

Bob said the minimum fee is \$300 per month plus a onetime set up fee of \$700.00. Shawn pointed out that if something happens to Bob the chapter would be in serious trouble and he thinks this is a good investment. Max and the other members present concurred. The members present agreed and there was a motion and second to retain JCCS CPA as our accounting firm and use them as needed to augment the Treasurer. *The motion passed 23 for, 0 against.*

- 4) **Form a 501 (c) 3 for the Chapter.** Bob led the discussion about forming a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit for the chapter. Currently Chapter 28 operates under National's 501 (c) 19 nonprofit for a fraternal veterans organization. From a tax perspective a 501 (c) 3 is virtually the same as a 501 (c) 19 but many of our very large donors have trusts with restrictive bylaws. Most will only allow the trust to donate to a 501 (c) 3. In the past we have partnered with The Green Beret Foundation or other friendly 501 (c) 3 nonprofits to channel the funds to our chapter.

The way this works is a donor gives the money to the 501 (c) 3 and they give it to us. This arrangement is awkward when dealing with potential donors. Since the chapter is attracting more large donations from foundations and trusts, Bob thinks it would be worth the time and money to form our own 501 (c) 3. The members present agreed and a motion was made and seconded for Chapter 28 to form our own 501 (c) 3. *The motion passed 23 for, 0 against.*

Bob said he would start the process as soon as he finishes with another 501 (c) 3 he is working on. He expects it will take about a year before the chapter has its own 501 (c) 3 ready to accept donations.

- 5) **Communication;** This was a pretty lengthy discussion about how to best to communicate with members, potential members and supporters. The conclusion was that we need multiple channels to reach members (and potential members) where they are vs. trying to get them all on the same platform. Virtually all chapter communications are now electronic due to the cost and manpower required to physically mail newsletters and invitations.

Paul Turpin manages our Facebook page and is having very good success with it. He noted that we reached about 10,000 people for the FSSF 80th. This is a record so far for the chapter. It is a good example of how rapidly a Facebook post can spread when people start sharing it. Many relatives of Forcemen started sharing that post and it “blew up”.

Paul mentioned that he doesn’t know much about Instagram but thought it might make a good addition to our communications options, especially when reaching out to younger members and prospective members. Adam Klippenstein, the youngest member present, volunteered to help Paul set up an Instagram account.

Shawn talked about the website and how he is trying very hard to keep the events page (<https://www.sfa28.org/events>) updated. His goal is to train members to check that page if they are wondering what is going on with the chapter or when a specific event is. It is really important that members share events with Shawn so he can post them on that page. He needs the time, location and a description of the event. He can tag the event with a google maps pin so members can click the event and navigate right to it with their phones.

Frank Curry asked about the member login side of the webpage. Shawn said he got it initially set up but it didn’t really catch on. This is potentially a very useful tool for sharing member rosters, financial statements and other sensitive information we don’t want to publish on the public side of the website.

Shawn asked Chris Sorenson if he thought National’s new Teamhouse platform would be a better option. Chris doesn’t think it is there yet but he is hopeful in a couple of years it will be the portal everyone goes to. Teamhouse is not user friendly enough for most members to comfortably navigate at this time. Chris pointed out that one of the most attractive features right now is finding members. Teamhouse will actually map their address under their profile. The downside is members must make their profiles public for these tools to work (opt in) so most members don’t show up. Chapter members who use Teamhouse are encouraged to make their profiles visible since it is a secure site.

We agreed that the secure member login on sfa28.org is our best short term option to address the secure communications issue. Shawn said he will work on it and try to get that project back on track so members have secure coms.

One topic that didn't come up that is worth mentioning is the Chapter Slack account. It has been working very well for project specific communications like Winter Warrior or FSSF 80th. Members can email Shawn at sfaxxviii@gmail.com to request an invitation to our Slack channel.

- 6) **V-42/ Frederick Award Status.** Production has been suspended by Case due to Factory capacity. Bob is working with Mike Mulholland and several other high ranking members and friends of the chapter to pressure Case into resuming production. This is a critical problem because the V-42s are essential to support Fredrick Awards.

- 7) **“Respites”** Don gave a report on the new K Bar L respite that is replacing the Bar W. Don said it was a very good trip and the guests all had a great time. Since this was the first one, there were a few lessons learned such as the chapter is responsible for tipping the staff. Everything else is donated by the K Bar L.

Don said he and his wife really enjoyed the trip but he would like to see other members take advantage of the 2 slots we get for members on that trip. He will continue to manage it and go on the trip if no other members sign up.

There was also some discussion about members not realizing that they can attend some of the respites as paying participants. This is a great benefit of Chapter 28 membership because members can come on respites and take advantage of chapter discounts. It doesn't cost the chapter anything to add a self-paying member to the group.

Some respites like Ruby Springs and K Bar L are very limited capacity so extra members *would not* be able to tag along on those events. Winter Warrior is a good example of a respite that has plenty of extra room for members and their guests. Chapter members can get discounts on passes, rentals and lessons at Whitefish Mountain Resort because they are part of our group.

Overall the respite program seems to be working very well. We have a few key individuals who handle the same sub tasks for the respites every year. This makes it pretty easy to put one on. The risk is that if one of our key organizers is unavailable, we could have difficulty covering their job. Alternates for each position would be ideal but currently we don't have enough volunteers.

- 8) **Ambassadors, Leadership and regional gatherings.** Max talked about the difficulty of getting together in such a large state with geographically dispersed members. Plus, most members are pretty busy and coordinating schedules is a real challenge. The chapter has always encouraged members to get together with small, local groups when they can. This is much easier than trying to get all of us together for a big banquet.

Bob made it clear that the chapter can help pay for expenses such as beverages and food. He does prefer a proposal and funding request in advance so he isn't getting surprised by a big bar tab. This also gives him a chance to set a budget based on available funds.

Since we haven't seen a lot of local gatherings the chapter has created an ambassador program to help promote and manage member get together and events. Ambassadors are also the POC for activities in their region. This can also be very helpful meeting with potential donors in their area. Appendix 2 list our member distribution and regional ambassadors.

9) **Gatherings and events.**

- a. **FSSF 80th.** We had about 1000 people turn out for the FSSF 80th event. Attendees came from all over the US and Canada. It was considered very successful by all who attended. Bill Woon did a great job as MC telling the story of the FSSF while free fall jumpers flew in the US and Canadian flags. Miss Montana dropped a stick of reenactment jumpers and active duty US and Canadian SF jumped from a CH-47. There were a lot of moving parts that came together to honor the FSSF. It was quite a show. We will be posting videos and photos on our website and Facebook page as they come in.
- b. **4-160th Beer and burgers event.** It was still in planning when the meeting took place. 4-160th came out to Montana to train and the chapter hosted them at Big Sky Brewery for free beer and burgers following a tour of an MH-47G. 41 active duty and about 11 chapter members and guests participated. We received excellent feedback from the active duty guests and they expressed a strong desire to do more training in Montana. One of the challenges for them training in Montana is that we don't have an aerial gunnery range for them. They said if they could do gunnery, they'd like to move the whole battalion out here because the training and lifestyle is better. Everyone realizes that getting an aerial gunnery range built and moving a battalion is a huge deal but it is good to have goals.

We also talked about respites and how effective notifications are when we have slots for 4-160. It doesn't sound like our invitations are consistently making it out to the front line. Shawn told the senior warrants that we would like to make sure that soldiers who have had particularly difficult deployments or whose marriages really need some help are prioritized for the respites.

- c. **Winter Warrior:** Winter Warrior is our next respite currently scheduled for February 6-11, 2023. It is up on the chapter events page on sfa28.org.

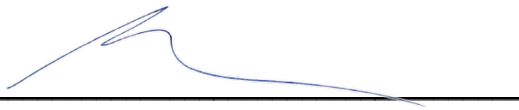
- d. **Annual meeting and banquet.** Max pointed out that it isn't practical to have another state wide member meeting and banquet this year. Since we had good member turn out for the 80th and this meeting, we are done for 2022. Of course, regional gatherings are still encouraged.

There was a lot of discussion about where to have the banquet and meeting next year. Banquets without fundraisers and auctions are much easier to organize. Frank Curry pointed out that some donors really enjoy the big fundraisers in Whitefish but of course it is a lot of work to put those together. We decided to see how we are doing with funds at the end of the year before we make a decision about a banquet and meeting for 2023. We thought that having it in the fall would give us time to plan if we start in January. If we don't need a lot of extra money to support operations, we can have the banquet anywhere and it should take less planning. If we need to do a big fundraiser, Whitefish has always been our best venue. TBD.

- 10) **Membership and participation.** Don led the discussion about how to recruit new members. Specifically younger members. We decided to offer new members a one year free membership. The chapter would pay for the introductory membership then it would be on the new member to renew. We expect that most won't renew but if we get a couple of active new members every year it should be worth the investment. *Don made the motion, it was seconded and passed 25 to 0.*
- 11) **Other Business.** Bill Waldron and Lonnie Cook briefed us on the robust training support they are offering the active duty groups and SOF. Bottom line is that anyone interested in virtually any kind of training in Montana should call Bill before they send out a PDSS (Pre Deployment Site Survey). He's got contacts and templates that can save the teams a lot of time and money. There has been a consistent problem with units "reinventing the wheel" every time they come out which makes planning and support a lot harder than it needs to be.

BG Wilkins and Ft. Harrison are working on getting a couple of active duty SF soldiers stationed there to help facilitate training in Montana. The concept is that they would be able to do their SWCS tour in Montana vs. North Carolina at the military installation formerly known as Ft. Bragg. These would be permanent LNOs who would become the primary POCs for any SF/SOF training in Montana.

12) **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 1210 MST.



Shawn Modula

Secretary

APPENDIX:

1 – Scope of Services JCCS Certified Public Accountants

2 – Ambassadors and Regional Member Demographics