

The “Noyz Boyz from Illinoiz”-

a History of the Formation of Rolling Thunder® Inc., Illinois Chapter #1



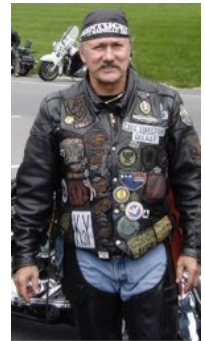
Most histories start with one - our one is Dennis “LT” Reiter.

Dennis heard about the annual gathering of motorcycles in Washington D.C. hosted by Rolling Thunder®, Inc. named the Ride For Freedom, which was created to bring awareness to Veteran issues in particular to remember those considered Prisoners of War and Missing in Action. His wife, Lenda, recommended he should go as it might help bring closure to his experiences in Vietnam.

So, in 1995 he struck out to ride his motorcycle solo to Washington. He traveled to

Louisville, KY, to link up with a group called Task Force Omega headed by Danny “Greasy” Belcher, a group that he had heard about. After several false drive bys, he found the correct Harley Davidson dealership where the group gathered and the journey began - LT with a group from Kentucky

He traveled with Task Force Omega and easily made friends with Greasy their leader (shown in picture). The group traveled with stops made at various towns and memorials along the way reminding all present of the missing and/or captured veterans. The stops included flag raising ceremonies at local high schools in Kentucky and West Virginia.



One of the stops included Rainelle, West VA, to participate in several days of patriotic events. It remains a stop to this day.



Many kids of Rainelle, West VA, asked the visiting bikers to sign their T-shirts.



On his inaugural trip in 1995, LT found he had no place to stay in Washington DC. Fortunately there was a cancellation in the KY contingent and he stayed with his new friends at the Best Western Motel in Falls Church, VA, the first of many years that our group would stay there. A successful and emotional first trip was made.

In 1996, LT was introduced to Dale “Curly” Evanovich through LT’s wife, and the two of them rode to meet Greasy and Task Force Omega. They rode to Washington DC together via Kentucky and West Virginia with Task Force Omega making the same stops along the way.

Jim “Crazy” Stepanek who knew both LT and Curly through VietNow out of Rockford, IL (www.vietnow.com) happened to meet them while he was on a business trip at the same time they were participating in the demonstration ride down Constitution Ave. in D.C. Jim wrote-

“I watched them ride past and met them at the end of the baseball field. It was exciting! I told them that I didn’t care if I had to ride a Schwinn, I would ride the next year.”



When Jim got back to Illinois he felt compelled to join Rolling Thunder® as a Member at Large.

IN 1997 - Dennis and Dale again rode together to Washington D.C. once again linking up with Task Force Omega in Kentucky and going to all the same stops.

By 1998 Jim Stepanek had purchased his Harley and was able to ride with Dennis and Dale.

In 1999, LT had more to go with him to Washington DC via Kentucky and Rainelle, West Virginia. As claimed by Milan”Moe” Kondich-

“I’m pretty sure this is the first RT ride where LT recruited a larger crew. This picture was taken in Rainelle outside the auto parts store. Curly, LT, Crazy, Axe, Slick, Lisa, Sweetie, Bitch, Snipe and Moe all surrounding a fellow by the name of Rocky. He was a member of the Kentucky group or at least from the Louisville area. This fellow had sandwiches in his vest pockets and could spin a yarn like no other. And of course you were knee deep into his story before you realized that you had fallen hook, line, and sinker for his story. We pitched tents in the municipal park and watched the little leaguers play baseball. The Moose Lodge was only a block away. . . . I had a passing acquaintance with Curly and didn’t really know anyone else. By the time we got home there were 3 new road names and all were friends for life . . .

So we had 9 bikes and 10 people. There was so much that happened you would have to get the group together and reminisce. Every time we got off the bikes we would start laughing and scratching. You know how these trips are. The nights in Rainelle, Owingsville, Falls Church, Best Western bar and so on.

We met Skider and Penny (from Indiana) that trip but didn’t pal up until the next year. From there we befriended the Indiana group plus Greasy, Rocky, JJ, Mario, K-Bar all from KY, etc”



For the Ride to DC in 2000, a Rolling Thunder® founding member, Andy (Spilz) Gorski, summarized many of his emotions for joining the Rolling Thunder® Ride for Freedom when he wrote -

“The Sunday before Memorial Day 1999, I was sitting in my family room as CSPAN aired interviews from the Pentagon parking lot of bikers who rode to draw attention to the POW/MIA issue. As I listened, I felt it was disrespectful to continue sitting, and I was compelled to stand. Fighting back the welling tears that accompanied my witness of their testimonies, I called upstairs to Sandi, telling her that, even if I had to limp my old Honda there, the following year I was going to be with those honorable people in that parking lot.

I had known Moe Kondich for a time, and somehow during one of our conversations he mentioned that he and a few others from IL had actually ridden to the event I had watched on CSPAN. Rather than leaving me to ride alone, he invited me to join their group when they rode to DC the following year.

As so often happens, a long ride creates friendships, and our ride to DC was no different.

The group became close, and it was not uncommon for Sandi and me to abandon our weekend plans whenever we heard the early morning rumble as this core of riders - known as "Leather Turtles" - rode up our driveway and announced that we needed to brush our teeth and get dressed, because “KSU in 15 minutes.”

It was during this 2000 ride that LT received his road name. It came supposedly from Moe Kondich who traveled behind him on his “bike” . He claimed LT and Curly with their shaved heads and wearing leather they looked like “leather turtles”.

The name Leather Turtle stuck and became the group name for those who loved this country, the Veteran, and rode to Washington D.C. in 2000 or earlier according to their rules at the time. The Leather Turtles became the precursor group to Rolling Thunder® Illinois Chapter #1.

The Leather Turtles had a patch which was designed by Lee “Fleabag” Johnson.

Dennis Reiter’s road name “LT” actually stood for “Lead Turtle” and Dale Evanovich (Leather Turtle #2) became “Curly” also because of his shaved head. Moe Kondich wrote -



“Dale Evanovich had done RT a couple times before and he got the "Curly" name on the ride home. We all had lunch in Indiana for the last time as a group and we were harassing the waitress. After we asked her name, she asked ours. When I said Moe, she looked right at Dale and said "then you must be Curly". (Think “Three Stooges”)



The Original Leather Turtles (left to right)

1. Jim "Crazy" Stepanek (since moved to Florida)
2. Johnny "Da Mayor" Munroe (LT is Johnny's Father-in-Law)
3. Dennis "LT" Reiter
4. Blaine "Easy" Wood (LT's wife's nephew)
5. Dale "Curly" Evanovich (sitting)
6. Milan "Moe" Kondich
7. Andy "Spilz" Gorski (in the back)
8. Frank "Horns" Allemana (wearing the "Chicago" shirt)
9. Bob "Axeman" Gangloff (standing in back next to Andy)
10. George "Doc" Paton
11. Tim "Slick" Miller (since moved to Indiana) and wife Lisa (not pictured)
12. Manny Lopez
13. Jim "Snipe" Murray (not pictured)
14. Rick Parker (not pictured)
15. Shannon "Sweetie" Parker (not pictured)
16. Larry "Roadkill" Smith (not pictured)

The 2000 ride to D.C. included many more riders and the same stops along the way. The Kozinski family of Porter, IN of Rolling Thunder® Indiana who the Leather Turtles met in 1999 joined the group again and eventually transferred their RT membership to the Illinois Chapter. They were David J. "Skider" Kozinski, his wife Penny "Bandit", and sons, Aaron S "Joker", David J. "Bones".

After this last ride to D.C., Rick Parker, Jim "Snipe" Murray, Dennis "LT" Reiter, Dale "Curly" Evanovich, and Jim "Crazy" Stepanek, who all knew each other from VietNow, began informally lobbying the other Leather Turtles to join Rolling Thunder® and form a new chapter.

In the summer of 2000 on a social run to Starved Rock State Park, the Leather Turtles "voted" to explore chartering a new Rolling Thunder chapter. Jim Stepanek, who was already a Rolling Thunder® Member at Large, was to lead the investigation and handle the paperwork.

On or about Oct 16, 2000, an Organizational Meeting for the prospective Chapter of Rolling Thunder® in Illinois was called to order by Jim Stepanek at 7:45 PM.

Artie Mueller, Chairman of Rolling Thunder® National, that although Rolling Thunder® National was not a motorcycle club, nevertheless required that each state chapter had to get tacit permission or "blessing" from the leading motorcycle club of each individual state which in Illinois meant visiting the Outlaws. Andy Gorski and Dale Evanovich headed up this mission and were successful in securing that blessing.

At this meeting Nominations for Officers of the informal Rolling Thunder® in Illinois were heard and accepted.

The following were the results:

**Dennis Reiter - President
Dale Evanovich - Vice President
Bob Gangloff - Secretary
Rick Parker- Treasurer**

The following were appointed and/or volunteered for Directors :

**Frank Malczewski
Linda Pasetti
Moe Kondich
Andy Gorski
Shannon Parker**

Meetings for Rolling Thunder® in Illinois were decided to be held on the 1st Wed of each month at 7:30 PM. The location of the meetings were to be at the Warrenville V.F.W. Hall.

All who filled out applications that night were to be declared charter members. Of the 29 people in attendance, 27 filled out applications.

On Dec 6th, 2000, a meeting was called to order at 7:45 PM by President Dennis Reiter. A roll call of Officers and Directors was taken. The following was a list of officers in attendance:

Dennis “LT” Reiter - President

Dale “Curly” Evanovich - Vice President

Bob “Axeman” Gangloff - Secretary

Andy “Spilz” Gorski - Chairman of the Board Directors

Milan “Moe” Kondich- Director

Shannon “Sweetie” Parker - Director



Members submitted designs for a chapter logo for the chapter letterhead and cards. Frank “Horns” Allemana’s design ultimately won and remains our current logo and letterhead.

Barry “Bear” Simmons motioned to formally form Rolling Thunder® Inc., Illinois Chapter #1. It was seconded by Bonnie “Buzz” Bradlee. The Motion carried 19-0.

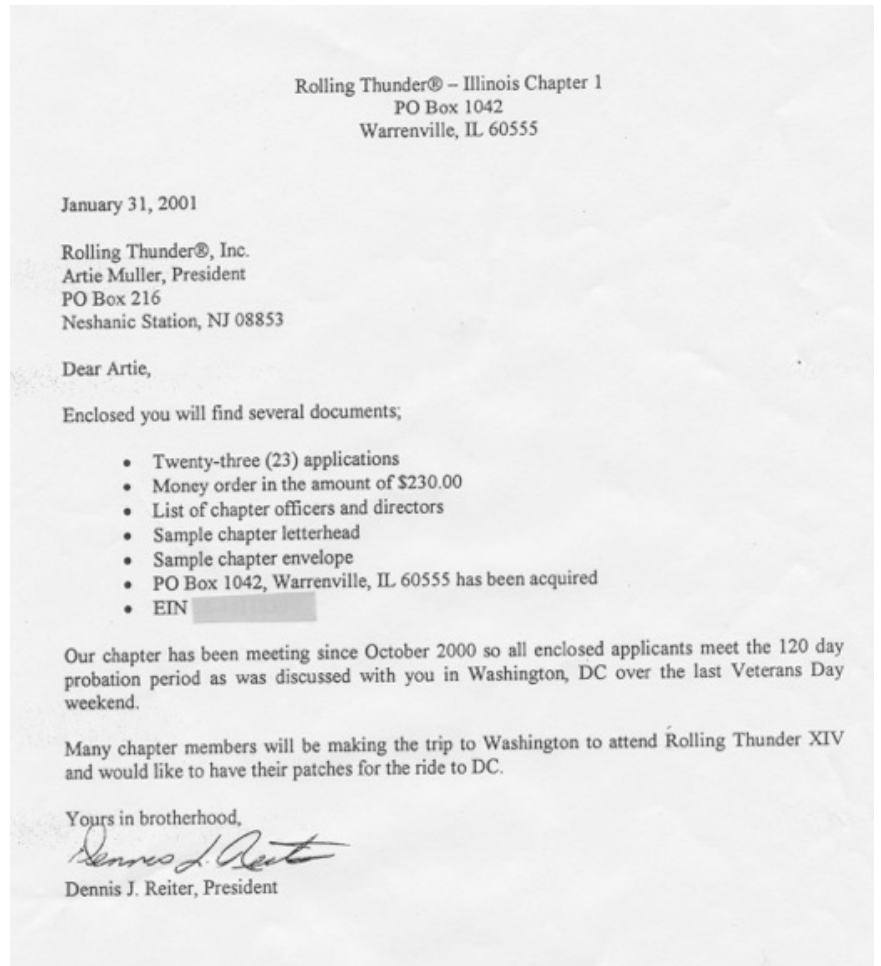
Dennis Reiter was to let Artie Mueller from National know of the decision. The following letter was sent to Rolling Thunder® National.

Also, here is a copy of an early roster.

tblMembers Query

LastName	FirstName	JoinDate
Allemana	Frank N.	10/4/2000
Andrews	David C.	10/4/2000
Augustynowic	John C.	10/4/2000
Bradlee	Bonnie B.	10/4/2000
Evanovich	Dale W.	10/4/2000
Gangloff	Robert L.	10/4/2000
Goeb	Jerry	10/4/2000
Gorski	Andrew R.	10/4/2000
Hahne	Keith H.	10/4/2000
Jaegle	Charles F.	10/4/2000
Kondich	Milan	10/4/2000
Lassen	Harold C.	10/4/2000
Lopez	Manuel J.	10/4/2000
Malczewski	Kathie	10/4/2000
Malczewski	Frank J.	10/4/2000
Miller	Tim	10/4/2000
Miotto	Louis	10/4/2000
Montenegro	Yolanda M.	10/4/2000
Montgomery	Richard M.	10/4/2000
Munro	John	10/4/2000
Murray	James K.	10/4/2000
Pagonis	John	10/4/2000
Parker	Rick A.	10/4/2000
Parker	Shannon M.	10/4/2000
Pasetti	Linda A.	10/4/2000
Paton	George	10/4/2000
Pianovski	Jimmy J.	10/4/2000
Reiter	Dennis J.	10/4/2000
Stepanek	James M.	10/4/2000
Stepanek	Marcia A.	10/4/2000
Wilkins	Gary L.	10/4/2000
Witmer	Cheryl M.	10/4/2000
Witmer	Steve C.	10/4/2000
Woods	Blaine R.	10/4/2000
Zayat	Richard J.	10/4/2000

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Rolling Thunder® Inc., Illinois Chapter #1 was officially recognized Feb 2, 2001

ROLLING THUNDER®, INC.

POW



MIA

THIS CHARTER IS PRESENTED TO
CHAPTER 1 OF Illinois

DATE February 2, 2001

William M. Miller
NATIONAL PRESIDENT



John E. Mond
NATIONAL V. PRESIDENT



Rolling Thunder® Chapter #1 Meeting - Dec 2001

The first three Presidents were Dennis Reiter, Rick Parker, Dale Evanovich.

As with most new organizations the first year of the new Rolling Thunder® Chapter saw funding problems.

“The Warrenville VFW was kind enough to give us a meeting room at no cost, which was good because we had no money to pay them!

That first year was a lean year, especially by comparison to our current working budget. I can still recall our first president, LT, stating from the podium that, if we hoped to have any effect on communicating the POW/MIA issue to the public, then we were going to need some seed money to get our organization started. One by one, people walked to the podium, took out their wallets, and peeled out some money to throw onto the stack (my recollection is that Rick Parker was especially generous).” - Andy (Spilz) Gorski

In May of 2001, 27 Members of the new Illinois Chapter #1 traveled to Washington D.C. 12 members of that group carried Gold Star Mothers as passengers on their motorcycles during the Ride For Freedom.

The group pictured below went to D.C. in 2002.



Our early history would not be complete without the mention of some key people and events that provided some of our Chapter traditions.

Bill Garvey (left photo), a retired Marine, and his brother, Mike Garvey (on right), a retired Navy Chief Petty Officer, provided much entertainment, some road names and to this day the Chapter riders to D.C. spend their first day on the road bivouacking at Bill Garvey's farm currently located in Southern Indiana but formally located in Sheperdsville, KY. The Garvey's fed, entertained, and provided tent space. The pictures are of Bill Garvey's KY farm. They were part of the Kentucky group.



Bill Garvey's Welcome Rolling Thunder® Party Group May 2003





Another tradition saw our chapter in Rainelle, West VA, each year attending a youth baseball league game. At the game the baseball boosters would sell raffle tickets. The Boyz from Illinois would buy the raffle tickets essentially by the lineal foot. We always had the winning ticket and donated our winnings back to the league for field or equipment improvements.



In the year 2004, after several years of this, the league booster spokesman spoke to our chapter's Larry 'Roadkill' Smith when Larry went once again to claim the winning raffle ticket and donate our winnings. He asked Larry if the league boosters could do something for us and Larry responded that it would be nice to have a Rolling Thunder® Illinois Chapter #1 sign made.

In 2005, the Chapter went to the game as usual and were pleasantly surprised to see Larry's sign.



The sign was still there in 2014. (photo taken in 2009)



Another early tradition that was promoted by Rick Parker and Jim Stepanek involved establishing a relationship with the Gold Star Mothers. For several years our chapter treated them to dinner the night before the demonstration Ride for Freedom.



Illinois Chapter #1 was chosen each year to escort the Gold Star Moms in the Demonstration Ride the next day.

Illinois Chapter #1 remains to this day providing escort duty having expanded to Blue Star Moms and dignitaries.





”We gained fame because, led by Rick Parker, our chapter soon became the people in charge of caring for the Gold Star Mothers, i.e., dinner the night before, and on the day of the ride, making sure any GSM’s who wished to ride on the back of a motorcycle had a seat during the protest ride. We also handled the lining up of the bikes (first group: Gold Star Moms, then politicians/celebrities, etc). It soon became known that if someone had a question about certain logistics of the ride, they should ask one of the "Boyz from Illinoiz.” - Andy (Spilz) Gorski



Chapter #1 with Gold Star Moms in Washington D.C. - 2001



Rick Parker also brought to DC his showstopper of a patriotic themed trike that was comfortable to a Gold Star Mom.



There seems to be some controversy over how the group became the Noyz Boyz from Illinois.

One group claims the name was given to our chapter in Owingsville, KY at the horse track where the Illinois Group camped out usually taking the horse barn to stay out of any rain. The group slept in the horse stalls. When the Garvey's would arrive, the group magically became somewhat raucous with other people climbing up the slight incline to the horse barn to investigate the "noise" only to soon become contributing factors. That top of the hill group became known to all in the racetrack area as those "Noisy Boys from Illinois." Some credit Bill Garvey with the naming of the group.





Hotel "Owingsville" Kentucky (2001)



Hotel "Owingsville" Kentucky 2004

The other competing version is that the Illinois group would traditionally stay at the Best Western Motel in Falls Church, VA. discovered by LT on his first D.C. run. After the day's activities a social hour (or most of the time "hours") would commence in the motel's lounge, with the word "raucous" again coming into play. The word "loud" would be descriptive as well. Noisy Boys from Illinois moniker it is said came from some of the other KY patrons.



A wedding also enhanced our chapter's reputation - the marriage of Dale "Curly" Evanovich and his wife, Nancy, on a ride to D.C. in 2003. They were married at the Owingsville, KY, Race Track by Rev. Paul, an ordained minister and a KY rider. One of the stalls in the horse barn became their honeymoon suite.

"Upon learning of the impending nuptials, a small group of us rode to the town and scrambled to get a wedding cake and some decorations for their honeymoon suite. Sandi and some of the other women got together to decorate the "honeymoon suite" at least as best as a horse barn could lend itself to such decorations! Streamers, signs, balloons, etc..

I also recall the wedding ceremony, which was celebrated by one of the Kentucky riders, who also happened to be an ordained minister. At one point while everybody was holding hands in a very large circle inside the racetrack around the minister, bride, and groom, I recall looking at a person on the other side of the circle and thinking this will probably be the only time in our lives when we would be at a service and saying the Lord's Prayer while holding other people's hands and a beer." - Andy Gorski

So there you have it - It seems one man can make a difference with the insistence, support, and patience of a loving wife named Lenda, that is. Just one Veteran/Patriot - Dennis Reiter, who did not know it or thought of it at the time, was to become the central figure in our Chapter's history.

The group that sprang from Dennis's lone ride has become a strong, viable, and a special group thanks to its early leadership. Jim "Snipe" Murray describes how the Rolling Thunder® group grew when he wrote -

"I was brought in early (circa 1999 - 2000) as a result of being involved with Vietnow and working with Stepanek at Lucent. I knew Parker from Vietnow - so we all kind of migrated to RT as a group. I believe it was LT that initially went to DC on the bike and slowly over the years we all followed. LT knew Moe and Moe knew Spilz etc, etc."

From Dennis “LT” Reiter’s first ride to DC in 1995 and his 15 rides since, a lot of “friends inviting friends” instances have occurred.

Dennis Reiter, with the help of the Leather Turtles and others, have secured growth and a place of honor for Rolling Thunder® Inc., Illinois Chapter #1 within the national Rolling Thunder® family. Illinois Chapter #1 of Rolling Thunder® Inc. has become a force for good. Many Illinois Veterans have been helped and the POW/MIA will always be remembered here in Illinois.

Now there is more Chapter #1 history to be written.



Dennis “LT” Reiter

Author: Howard “Weebles” Bushnell

Note: Most photos were taken by the author in 2004 and 2005 with the back shot of Dennis Reiter taken in 2015. The “turtles on log” photo was supplied by Jim Murray. The 1999 Rainelle photo was provided by Moe Kondich. Andy Gorski provided the Original Leather Turtles photo. The 2002 photo of all in leathers was supplied by Jim Murray. The Wedding photo, Garvey’s 2003 Welcome Party, 2001 Gold Star Moms, Dec 2001 RT meeting photos were supplied by Dennis Reiter.



The author had the privilege to ride to Washington DC on the Ride For Freedom 7 times. He was honored in 2004 to be selected to provide the motorcycle escort for the National President (2004-2005) of The Gold Star Mothers, ANN HERD, from Dallas TX.

Rolling Thunder® II Chapter #1 Roster on Sept 28, 2001

Rolling Thunder - SEPT 28, 2001								
LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	ROAD NAME						
Allemana	Frank N.	Horns	Gruber	Rick L.	Rico	Lopez	Manuel J.	Manny
Andrews	David C.		Hahne	Keith H.		Malczewski	Frank J.	
Auer	Steve J.	Mouth	Harrison	Jeff S.	Scare	Malczewski	Kathie	
Augustynowicz	John C.	Augie	Holub	Jimmy J.	Sarge	Miller	Tim	Slick
Berlanga	Anita	Mama Bear	Huston	Harold R.	ZZ Top	Miotto	Louie	
Bobdel	Martin E.	Marty	Jaegle	Charles F.	Chuck	Montenegro	Yolanda M.	
Borland III	Henry H.	Ham	Jedrey	Richard W.	Triple M	Montgomery	Richard M.	Rick
Bradlee	Bonnie B.	Buzz	Johnson	Kenneth C.	Ken	Munro	John	JB
Brandenburg	John C.	Beau	Johnson	Mark D.		Murray	James K.	Snipe
Cannella	Patricia L.		Josefchak	Jennifer P.		Neisler	Pam S.	
Donnelly	Deb G.		Josefchak	Peter S.	Critter	Neisler	Ronald J.	Kane
Evanovich	Dale W.	Curly	Judd	Jim M.		Oliver	Jack M.	
Fortson	Quentin H.	Brother Kan	Kane	Charles F.		Olson	Tom	
Gangloff	Robert L.	Proctor	Kondich	Milan	Moe	Pagonis	John A.	Pago
Gleba	Leonard C.	Cris	Kozinski	Aaron S.	Joker	Park, Jr.	William P.	Mungo
Goeb	Jerry		Kozinski	Dave J.	Bones	Parker	Joan	
Gorski	Andrew R.	Spilz	Kozinski	David J.	Skider	Parker	Rick A.	Bitch
Gorski	Sandi R.		Kozinski	Penny	Bandit	Parker	Shannon M.	Sweetie
Grafton	Tom	Grizz	Lassen	Harold C.	Skip	Pasetti	Linda A.	
			Lonze	Marilee S.	Willow	Paton	George	Fallin
			Lonze	Thomas R.	Keeper	Pianovski	Jimmy J.	Ridler
Pianovski	Michael B.		Schadowsky	Randal L.	Cookie	Ward	Regina	Fluff
Pleticha, Sr.	Paul L.	Doc	Schiedler	David W.		White	Charles J.	
Rahoi	Edward A.	Cobra	Schrieoer	Fritz K.		Wilkins	Gary L.	
Reavis	Dwayne	Salty	Sodlacek	John A.		Witmer	Cheryl M.	Blade
Regan	Kathy Jo		Shields	Marcia A.		Witmer	Steve C.	Rage
Regan	William H.		Simmons	Barry A.	Bear	Woods	Blaine R.	Easy
Reiter	Dennis J.	LT	Slenk	James		Zayat	Richard J.	
Riha	Richard	Redwolf	Stepanek	James M.	Crazy			
Ross	Donald		Tatoiu	Steve				
Ross	Janet		Terrill	William L.				
			Thevenot	James R.				

