

# From the President | May 2026



James McLanahan  
President SFA Ch. 78

## Picking Up Speed

I had a strength coach at 1st Group who loved to say teamwork makes the dream work. Rob was right; it does. We are just getting started.

It's always great to see how much gets done when you have a good team. It doesn't have to be superstars. And sometimes the superstars step on each other's toes. While we try not to, sometimes it happens. We are just trying to be all we can be.

Working together, we get more than we give. Individually and collectively, our efforts have created many great opportunities for the Chapter to grow, to go more places, like Normandy, with Walk Among Heroes. Thanks to Tom Turney for finding them. Thanks to Joseph Ivanov for inviting us to the French Resistance Monument. And we have had opportunities to work by, with, and through the community around us.

On that subject, the Valor Luncheon is the one event each year where we reach outside the SF community. We do this to raise money for Chapter 78, to help other Green Berets, and to share our heroes with the rest of our community. In doing so, we get a great opportunity to help others, too, because we also care about them.

Once again, at this year's event, Melanie's friends, AKA the Weekend Social Club, showed up in full force to help. They did a very heavy lift for us—as they have every year. Debra, who puts so much work in, had to give up her seat several times because so many more people came than expected.

This year, we filled our venue for the Valor Luncheon honoring “Dynamite” Henry (Dick) Thompson. He is an American legend from MACV-SOG. He is one of those heroes. And now more people know.

Dick has helped every time I have called and asked. He has been our guest speaker at a monthly chapter meeting. He spoke for C Co. at their dining out. And on Sunday, the 19th of April, he spoke to over 230



The Valor Luncheon team at the final pre-event planning meeting.

people. The audience included cadets from UCI, CSUF, and UCLA and folks who came from as far away as Massachusetts. He signed programs, autographed books, took pictures, and graciously handed out coins to Sunburst Academy cadets. My hope is that those people took something away from that day. I hope they left in awe of him and the men he fought with. The way I am. I hope they also took pride in helping the chapter, Sunburst, and our Afghan-American partners make their way. The paddle raise alone raised over \$23,000 for Sunburst and the Afghans. Even more unpledged donations have been coming in these past few days. Thank you, Dynamite. Thank you, everyone.

But the craziest part of this year's event was that I was tired, my wife, Mel, was tired, and we were scared we wouldn't have the energy to call enough people or visit enough businesses and get it all done to have a good event.

Instead, almost every single business that donated last year did it again. And some brought friends. Everyone who helped last year helped again, and some brought friends. We had more chapter members show up, donate, or help. And some brought friends. Some brought spouses too. Thanks, Mark and Amy Griffin.

At our planning meetings, the conference room was full of people. Included in the group were Marla and Wayne Ogelvie of the American Veterans Assistance Group, who worked tirelessly to obtain many of the raffle items and were also on hand at the event to help with set up, and Liz Rios and Norberto Villegas, who've helped from the beginning, took on even more responsibilities this year. Their assistance went a long way to helping to make things go more smoothly.

This year, I took my foot off the gas, and we picked up speed. It looks like Chapter 78 chose momentum. Thank you. ❖

*De Oppresso Liber,*  
James McLanahan  
President, SFA Chapter 78



## SFA Chapter 78 Monthly Meeting

### May 16, 2026

Breakfast – 0800 • Meeting – 0830

**Courtyard by Marriott**

5865 Katella Ave, Room A  
Cypress, CA 90630

### 2026 Meeting Schedule:

June 20 • July 18 • August 15 • September 19 •  
October 17 • November 21 • December (TBA)