

## SFA Chapter 78 August 2026 Chapter Meeting

Photos by How Miller and Doreen Matsumoto

## Guest Speaker,

**Ben Ruzicka, SFC (ret.), 18D, 1st SFG****Artist, Illustrator, Author****Ben Ruzicka Studios****[www.benruzicka.com](http://www.benruzicka.com)**

**1** Guest speaker Ben Ruzicka served on the same team as Medal of Honor recipient Earl Plumlee and Chapter President James McLanahan. Raised off-grid in remote Alaska, he learned survival skills and a love of art before joining the Army in 2003 at 19, later earning his Green Beret and becoming a Bravo Team Medic. On his last combat deployment in 2013, he was wounded by an RPG and suffered a severe back injury; surgical errors in 2018 left him unable to walk, leading to medical retirement after 17 years of service. He then reevaluated his life and returned to art, drawing on lessons from his medic days—above all, the importance of asking for help. As he put it, “Humility is not a weakness.” He now lives in Florida with his wife and four children, working as an illustrator, comic book artist, and children’s book writer/illustrator.

**2** Chapter President James McLanahan presents a chapter challenge coin to his friend Ben Ruzicka.

**3** Ben Ruzicka donated “Mary Sue” to Chapter 78 and it was auctioned at our 2026 Valor Luncheon fundraiser in April.

**4** Richard Simonian and John Creel, who the group was thrilled to see after a long absence.

**5** The *Sentinel* Team, Richard Simonian, How Miller, and Debra Holm, was presented with the award for the SFA Best Newsletter for 2025-2026.

**6** Aaron Brandenburg, who updated the members on his recent successful brain surgery experience, and Chapter Secretary Gary Macnamara.

**7** Charlie Le, SFA Chapter 12 member, worked with A Teams on the border and with SEAL Teams during the Vietnam War.

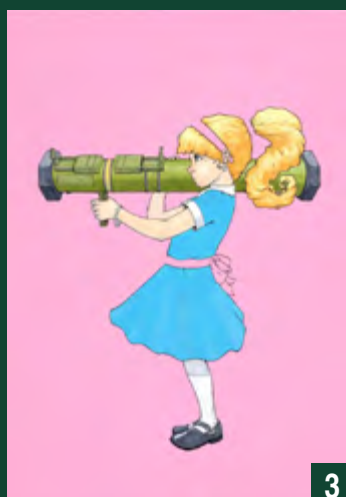
**8** Ron Cabrera, retired CSM, Marine veteran and former member of the National Guard stationed at the JFTB.



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