

From the President | November 2026



James McLanahan
President SFA Ch. 78

A Straight Line

I want to stay on the path I started with in the military. It changed direction and went up and down; I could not see where it was going. Initially, NCOs far senior to me had to do a lot of work to keep me on it. The true path and where it would take me were beyond my comprehension at the time. If you asked me then, it was just to be all I can be.

There were not a lot of us, or we with the motivation to join. I thought going together meant everyone pulling their weight and ending up in the same place. But if a bunch of individuals take off on a dangerous trip together and make it to the destination at the same time, they didn't do it alone.

One of the first times I received a correction about this attitude was a drill sergeant watching me pick up other people's bags they had forgotten in their haste and worry so we would all make a time hack. I thought I was alone and said to myself aloud, "*This is the last time I carry someone else's gear.*" He immediately stated flatly, "*Wrong as shit, private.*" And went on to say that I was going to be carrying other people's stuff as long as I was in the army. Other people would carry mine too. He let me know it had to be that way.

While I didn't think it was how it should be, I came to realize that was how teamwork actually worked. There isn't a score-keeping system. And it isn't fair. But everyone gets more when we all dig in and decide to be all we can be.

This year we started off with several goals. The chapter has come together and done a ton of work to preserve and appreciate our shared history, with speakers like James Stejskal with his book *Masters of Mayhem*, Tom Turney putting together our fantastic Normandy Trip, and all the history captured by How and Debra in the *Sentinel*.

But we have also looked at ways to support the next generation and help inspire. Johann Hindert and Michael Jameson have been exceptional supporters and examples for the Sunburst Youth Academy. And, by the way, their next class graduates again in December. We also had the largest turnout to date at our Valor Luncheon. And we raised the most money for the Afghans ever. Many thanks to Dick Thompson, Johann Hindert, my better half Melanie, Liz Rios, Don Deatherage, Mark Griffin, and all the chapter members who pitched in. We have only a short time left in this year, but I know we can stay on the path and really deliver for the community.

Thank you, everyone, for helping and keeping us moving. It's easier to stay on the path someone else already started than to find it. Thank you to everyone who helps out at every meeting, especially when we need a last-minute meeting speaker, and for every *Sentinel* issue. This year is going smoothly because you picked up someone else's rucksack so we could all walk a straight line to arrive at our destination together. ♦

De Oppresso Liber,
James McLanahan
President, SFA Chapter 78

Eat, Drink, & Be Merry!

SFA Chapter 78 Christmas Party December 12th, 2026 • 4pm – 8pm

Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club

1601 Bayside Dr., Corona Del Mar, CA 92625

1500 Cocktail Hour • Program Start Time 1600

With guest speaker Jack Boeki, author of *From Fugitive to Freedom: The Amazing Story of How a Holocaust Survivor Became a Nazi Hunter*

COST: \$40.00 per person, same for guests

Special Note: Members of C/1/19 are invited to attend FREE.

Please mail your check payable to **SFA 78** **no later than 12/5/26** to:

Santiago Corp, PO Box 11927, Santa Ana, CA 92711 Attn: Liz Rios

QUESTIONS???

Please send an email to James McLanahan at registration@specialforces78.com.

DRESS: Men—SFA Green Blazers, White Shirt with Regimental Tie, Dark or Gray Slacks, or Sport Coat with Tie. **Ladies**—Cocktail Attire

For checks not sent before the December 1st: Please send email to lrios@santiagocorp.com to allow an accurate head count. **Please make sure your check arrives on or before the 6th.**