



View From The Tower

Official Newsletter of The Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association

www.rameyafb.net

Maria trashes Ramey



Photos/Gerry Giles

Hurricane Maria heavily damaged the metal hangar—owned by Western Aviation Service Corp.—that houses the Ramey museum.



The museum's interior when Gerry Giles visited it after the storm passed was devastated.

Hurricane's winds and rain destroy museum's home

Hurricane Maria left a path of death and destruction across Puerto Rico. It ended what her sister, Irma, started.

Maria shook Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association members on the island, who hunkered down to ride out the storm during those terrifying hours.

Maria's winds collapsed the ceiling of the Borinquen Field-Ramey Air Force Base Museum, causing heavy damage.

"I don't think we will rebuild in this location—not permanent enough," Museum Director Gerry Giles said of his first assessment of the damage.

Luckily, most museum artifacts are salvageable, he said.

Ramey and surrounding areas were hit hard, but not as hard as the rest of the island, said Rafael Barradas, an Aguadilla city council member. "It will take a long time to recover," he said.

At press time, "We still had not heard from all our museum volunteers. We pray that they're safe," President Joyce Lanier said. But, she said, "We must keep moving forward. That's what we do when faced with such adversity."

Editor's note: We will update this story in the next issue of this newsletter.

■ Riding out the storm

Museum Director Gerry Giles and his wife, Miriam, rode out the storm at their Ramey N Street home. They're safe. Read **Gerry's account** of riding out the storm starting on **Page 2**.

10 Reunion update

Fort Walton Beach, Florida— April 10 to 14—is the site of the Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association's 2018 reunion. Register now—it's still \$190. And sign up NOW for a \$60-room.

Museum director gives first-hand account of riding out Hurricane Maria, aftermath

Editor's note: Like millions of people on Puerto Rico, Gerry and Miriam Giles hunkered down and rode out Hurricane Maria. They stayed in their home on Ramey's N Street and—like some cousins I have who live just down the same street—they made it. As Maria passed, Gerry, our museum director, kept a diary. He uses military time and, in some cases, his neighbor's first names. We thank him for providing us this first-hand account:

Time is now noon on Wednesday, Sept. 20. We are wrapped with Maria's wrath of severe winds and some rain. The gusty winds are terrorizing everyone. Two trees on our street are down. Our side fence on the east side is in the neighbor's yard, too. Some heavy branches are down in our yard. The west side wood fence has also blown apart into our yard.

The wind is relentless, noisy and just plain scary! The wind is blowing north to south up N Street and should continue in this pattern until the eye passes our longitude later today. We might be six hours more with this storm, still. Our electricity is holding up. We lost Internet around 11 this morning. This means probably everyone on the island is disconnected from our neighbors and the outside world. We are helpless for now. We must just ride out this natural madness.

Miriam is fussing all around the house checking, peering, listening. Her biggest worry are the three large sliding doors that open onto our walled patio. There is a solid glass roof over the patio that can withstand direct

hits and it is holding up very well. The three patio doors flex in and out with the air pressure—and she worries.

Now 1330 and there is a calm. The eye? Very little wind. We went out to assess the neighborhood. Across the street, behind the house, several trees down including a mango. A wood power pole is leaning south. More trees on the street. We have lost a few, maybe 15, Spanish roof tiles that we can see. Some folks are walking on the street now with the calm. If this is the eye, we can expect winds to return with a fury from the south. My rain gauge says 4.5 inches of rain.

Very strange calmness now. Boy, do we have some messes to clean up. Chain saws to the front next week!

Still no telephone nor Internet or television. During the calm many went out to check on the damages. No injuries, but a lot of wind did a lot of adjustments to the scenery.

Dyce lost both large traveler palms, their storage shed and a short wood fence. Oscar has a lot of Dyce's shed (in his yard) and lost two coconut trees in front yard. Rique's kayaks are now in Tricoches's backyard, almost in the pool. The power pole behind us needs attention and the transformer cables on our pole were ripped off! Medinas lost their Pomarosa tree. Bruny and Angel lost most of their street side trees. Rosa Sanders will not need to trim her Flamboyant tree. Nature peeled most of it away. Down

toward De la Garza and U Street, evidence of someone's metal roof is scattered all over, including on Jeremy and Anna's yard. I don't believe electric power will be 100 percent on the island for two months. Our water is at a trickle but we have lots of pots filled.

It is 1440 and the calm is persisting. What is going on? We all will be cleaning up for days and days. During the calm, I went out with neighbor Raul Velez in his truck to survey the base streets and there is a lot of damage. Trees are down everywhere. Power lines and even cement poles, particularly the one in front of the Levain bakery. Hangar

See, Gerry's account, [Page 6](#) ▶



Photo/Gerry Giles

It didn't take long for Gerry Giles to mobilize friends and neighbors to help clean up the Borinquen Field-Ramey Air Force Base Museum. Volunteers also helped salvage as many artifacts as possible. The damages were such that reopening the museum in the same location may never happen, Giles said.

THIS AND THAT

New members

•**Cadet Grayson Davis**, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado, grandson of association patron member Bud Davis.

•**Cindy Johnson Plating**, Greenville, South Carolina, was at Ramey from 1963 to 1967.

Her father was the base recreation director. They lived on “D” Street and she was in junior high and ninth grade at Ramey High School.

Welcome back

•**Daphne Principe-Griffin**, Dedham, Massachusetts, a family member at Ramey from 1970 to 1976.

Final Fly-by

We lost no members, that we know of. A good thing.

Membership ticks up

The association’s total membership went up to 303, as of Sept. 15.

Thanks for “directly supporting the museum” go to the five members who upgraded their membership from annual to patron. We’ll update the website membership by October 31.

Let us know

There must be a million Ramey stories. You have one, right?

Sure you do. Maybe it's about your first impression of Ramey. An experience. A memorable moment in your life. Or just old photos.

If you do, we'd like to know about it. Maybe you'll let us publish it in the *View From The Tower*.

Contact us at: gypsydog22@gmail.com. Gracias.



Courtesy photo

Hurricane Irma uprooted Ramey museum sign. Gerry Giles, Borinquen Field-Ramey Air Force Base Museum director, stands by what's left of the museum's sign, after the storm sideswiped Puerto Rico, Sept. 7, 2017, and knocked it down. Irma pounded the island with winds of more than 100 mph, leaving an estimated 900,000 people without power. When Hurricane Maria made a direct hit on the island, Sept. 20, it completed the island's devastation, and destroyed the museum's hangar home—maybe forever.

Association coffers top the \$50k mark

The Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association—as of Aug. 31, 2017— has a total net worth of \$51,260.37 in the bank, Treasurer Elton Lanier said.

Dues continue to arrive, so the income increased, the treasurer said.

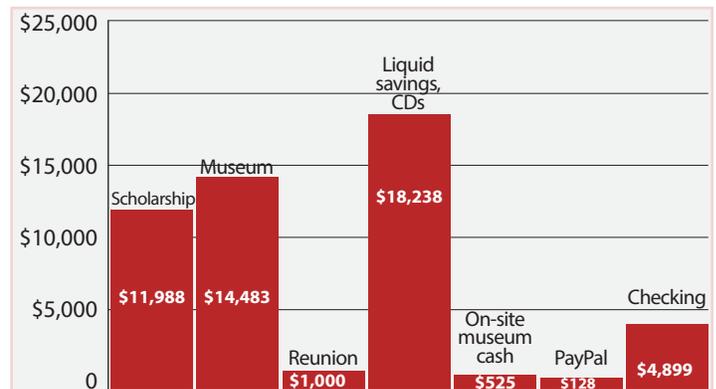
“But this is temporary, as it’s a once-a-year influx of cash needed for operating expenses during the year,” he said. “Thank you to all who exhibited their true Spirit of Ramey by renewing their membership,” he said.

“And a huge thank you

goes to our members who very generously sent an additional \$900 with their renewals for the scholarship

fund. Another \$227 was donated to the general fund.”

Here is our net worth:



We'll pray for those Maria hurt and then we have much to do

by Joyce Lanier
President

Maria devastated our beloved Puerto Rico nine days ago today, Sept. 29. I pray for Puerto Rico.

This was my first thought of the morning. So, I struggle to write about business.

My mind wanders. I don't want to begin to fully understand the discomfort, the hardship, the distress and the emotions of our RAFBHA family and friends—and their families and friends—who are living each day in the aftermath of that terrible storm.

I worry about them. I have great compassion for their situation. However, I also know that we must keep moving forward, as we all do when confronted with hardship.

Our museum was destroyed beyond use.

It was housed in the nose bay of a metal hangar owned by Western Aviation Service Corp. Owners Ruben and Eduardo Hernandez (and their father before them) have provided this wonderful location for our museum for many years. We will be forever grateful and indebted to them.

But now, we have no place to display our beloved memorabilia. Of course, we have a new urgency to find a home. The museum is closed until further notice. The good news is that it appears that most of the artifacts are salvageable, and the storage unit full of more artifacts was untouched by Maria. That also gives us a place to store the contents of the destroyed museum on Hangar Road.

Hurray for some good

news! You will read about it all in the hurricane story in this issue.



Courtesy photo

President Joyce Lanier

And we promise to keep you updated.

In the meantime, our board has diligently been working on analysis of all the factors that affect our association—our strengths and weaknesses, threats to not only our survival but to our growth, and opportunities we have yet to take advantage of.

We have also looked at political, economic and social influences that can either help us or hinder our sustainability. Technology has also become a key factor, especially in marketing. Yes, we need to market the association to survive.

Is your head spinning?

We've done this to formulate a conceivable five-year plan. The plan must have a vision for the future and be reasonably attainable. We must be confident that the goals we set in that plan accurately address our needs as an historical association that promotes the significance of Borinquen

Field and Ramey Air Force Base. And, at the same time, it must provide a venue for sustaining the memories which create the "Spirit of Ramey."

Our schedule called for this to be completed and published in this newsletter, but Maria altered our plans. We had to postpone the September meeting because Hurricane Irma was raging through Florida and affecting board members Louis Arana and Ralph Wicklund.

The newly scheduled meeting date was the day after Maria made her destructive entrance on the island. Louis and Ralph were still recovering and Gerry was unreachable. All three are fine, by the way.

We guarantee that we'll be working hard to get this completed. At the same time, our reunion committee is hard at work making 2018 reunion plans. It will be in Fort Walton Beach in 2018.

Check out Page 10 for the details.

We also will be forming a nominating committee to recommend persons to fill the seats of board members whose term expires. If you have a suggestion, or if you would like to serve on the nominating committee or the board of directors, please let me know.

The terms expiring: mine, as president; Terry Bucklew, secretary; and Garred Giles, member at large. No members have said if they will run for another term. So, for right now, everything is open to suggestions. I'd love to hear from you. You ARE the body of the association.

We continue to move forward. We have much to do. Adelante.

Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association

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View From The Tower

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Articles, images and views appearing in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the association, its board of directors or its members, and do not imply endorsement.

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Oct. 1	Sept. 1, 2017

■ Prayers for all

I hope and pray our friends and Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association members are OK after the storms. The images are heart breaking. We had a couple of hurricanes during my time there. We hunkered down, once in the Ramey High School gym with our students. We then had a party in a community room to calm our nerves. I remember some squadrons evacuated to Homestead AFB.

But these storms are so serious—we can only hope for everyone recovering better than ever.

—**Connie Landi Daniel**

Patron Member, Ramey teacher,
1964-1966
Tucson, Arizona

■ Found my home

I saw a photo on your website titled “approaching the main gate at Ramey.” Dad was stationed there round 1969. I went on Google Maps and spotted the house we lived in, 103 Cliff Rd. In the picture, the house is just to the left of the guard shack. I found a street view on Google Maps. The view was from the off-base side, across the canal, right of the guard shack. Brought back some memories. I was a kid and remember going to one of the clubs nearby and ordering French fries. Thank you.

—**Steve Clinton**
from our website

■ Reconnection

Editor’s note: **Bob Holliker**, of Whitehouse, Ohio, shared **Doug Poggensee’s** post on our Facebook page on August 7, 2017. It had a video clip of a B-36 flying over a stadium, but not at Ramey. These comments followed:

Stephanie Cheek Rice said, “My dad was one of those guys, a B-36 pilot.” Within minutes, association member **Gordon Hyde**, Omaha, Nebraska, asked,

“You **Benny Cheek’s** daughter? We were in Puerto Rico at the same time.”

Rice said, “Yes Gordon, he’s my dad. I’m glad to say he’s still living and doing pretty good for an 84-year-old. This is awesome. Can’t wait to call him!” The next morning she wrote, “Talked to my dad today and he remembers Gordon well. So glad I came across this page!”

—from Facebook

Editor’s note: Connections are made! Many members met Gordon and his family at the 2017 Puerto Rico reunion.

■ Museum tour

My father was stationed at Ramey and I was born at the base hospital in August 1972. My parents and I were on the island celebrating my 45th birthday. We drove to the west side of the island to tour as many “places we used to go” as we could. They were excited that I could become a member of the Casino Baby Club. I noticed that you operate a museum open on Saturdays and we wanted to visit it.

Editor’s note: The family was leaving the island before the museum opened on Saturday. Heather posted a note on the association website asking if she could get a tour. Association President **Joyce Lanier** asked her to call the museum, where **Jorge Torres** gave them a tour. Afterward, she wrote: “I cannot thank you

Want to comment on the Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association or its members? Do you have a beef or kudos?

Let us know and we might publish your comments in this section.

Please provide us your name, where you live now and when you were at Ramey.
Gracias.

enough. Jorge called us and met us at the museum. He was a fantastic host and docent. We could not have had a better or more informed experience. We grabbed a few Ramey T-shirts to wear proudly. Looking forward to staying connected to the rich history of Ramey. Thank you much for all you do! Be well.

—**Heather Sorensen and family**

Lutherville, Maryland
from our website

■ Stories to share

A few years ago, *View From the Tower* used my submission of a rambling email and “child warrior” photograph when I graduated from basic training at Lackland AFB, Texas, in July 1957. I was 17. I went on to do other things after eight years in the Air Force. I left as a staff sergeant. I got my degree in history—Soviet studies. Then I became a contract agent for Naval intelligence during Vietnam (I did not serve there). In early 1971, I accepted a direct Marine Corps Reserve commission as a captain and, 28 years later, retired as a colonel. I worked for the Defense Department as a field office chief in Los Angeles and retired early 1988. I moved on to the State Department as a representative for assessments and traveled a modest amount in China and Moscow. Gosh! Now you know everything with this bio sketch. I had a lot of fun and look back fondly to my Ramey days. Thanks for listening. Best regards.

—**Ken Walters**
Patron Member
Springfield, Virginia

■ Proud brat

My name is **Jon Gaw**. My father, **John W. Gaw** (association patron member, Eureka Springs, Arkansas), was stationed at Ramey from about 1960 to 1964. I

was 8 to 11 at that time, and enjoyed every day there. As I recall, my father was a master sergeant at that time, assigned to the base motor pool. As a young boy there, I have many great memories. I most recall the wonderful places for kids to play, the ORIs (operational readiness inspections) and the scramble on Nov. 23, 1963, when JFK was shot and killed. And I still recall exactly where I was when my mother called me to the house crying, telling me the president had been shot. We lived in base housing at the northeast corner of Wing Rd. and Calle X.

I am now 64 and about to retire from a lengthy career in law enforcement. I’m proud to have grown up an Air Force brat. For those who did not grow up during the Cold War, and have no idea of the effort and sacrifices made Strategic Air Command members, I feel it is important to keep the world informed of that history.

I plan to take a trip to Puerto Rico after I retire, to see it again, and try to make the 2019 reunion. It would be great to meet folks from that era. Maybe I’ll find someone who knew or worked with my father. I applaud your efforts to maintain this site and honor the Air Force and families who served there. Hope to meet you soon.

—**Jon J. Gaw**
via email

■ Just wondering

I read the article by **Mario Torres** (July 2017 newsletter) about rescuing Ramey’s beaches. He’s doing a wonderful job. I have no clue about the location, size or condition of the facilities he’s fixing up but, since the association is having difficulties finding a home for our museum, could one of these facilities work?

—**Jack Meers**
Life Member, Ramey, 1952-1955
Ipswich, Massachusetts

Gerry's account

►Continued from Page 2

Road is impassable and Belt Road just barely. Lots of palms closing streets down. Big rubber tree is down blocking Circle D. Terrible!

The calm went on for at least an hour. Then the winds returned.

By 1630 the calm was no more. Breezes, then gusts and more gusts and now, at 1830, the winds are roaring from the opposite direction, from the south. Soon it will be dark, but that means the eye will have pushed on to the northwest at its “trudgingly” slow pace of 10 mph.

When will this mayhem stop? I expected it to taper off by 1800, and still the winds are ferocious. Maybe by 2100? The news says we could expect 30 hours of winds from beginning (0700 today) until tomorrow around 1300. So, the calm we noticed was indeed the eye of the storm. And the wind direction did reverse. So, the storm is passing slowly to the northwest, too slowly.

The cleanup in our area will be extensive, but the other areas of the island must be in much worse condition. Catastrophic was the word the governor used. He was correct. As soon as we can, we will let everyone know about us, our friends and family here and how we coped. And we still have battery backup! I thank the sun! The phone line is very bad but we will make contact soon.

About 2100 our solar batteries shut down, leaving us to scrounge for a flashlight and then the forever-reliable candles. Dang! It is very humid, also, so sleep is difficult. Ah, the lights came on so we turned on the ceiling fan. That lasted



Photos/courtesy Gerry Giles

Top Hurricane Maria heavily damaged the hangar that houses the Ramey museum, and collapsed the ceiling. That destroyed the museum office, though Gerry Giles was able to salvage many items, including the museum computer.

Left Giles sorts through boxes of items, including the T-shirts, to salvage what he could.

about a half hour when it all dropped out again. Careful usage of household electrics is important when on battery power, and there is no sun to recharge. Will there be sunlight tomorrow? Doubtful.

It is now 2200 and we are sitting up. The humidity, the wind noise and no fans to cool our bodies makes for a miserable, sleepless night. Toss in thoughts of what to expect in the coming days, and that makes for nightmares as well.

0630 Thursday. The day after the fury of Maria.

Finally, after listening to the winds and strange noises of whatever is loose or floppy out there, the sounds of normalcy returned. Only a light breeze. Destruction in every direction. Soon, we will pull out the camp stove, connect the butane

bottle and prepare coffee. Gotta have that coffee! Then I will try and restore our communication links to the outside world, namely to you, family and friends.

Nothing worse than receiving no news, which does not necessarily mean ‘good news.’ In our message, we can say that both Miriam and I are fine, but we are surrounded by chaos. No water flowing, no electricity, no telephones. Ah, but there is gas in the cars but where to go?

Keep calm and carry on? What else? A neighbor is hammering on a recovery project out there already at first light. Gotta do whatcha gotta do!

Almost now. Folks are out when it’s not raining chopping, sweeping, observing, talking. Most

are amazed. So many trees, power lines, roofing blown down and around! Miriam and I drove around the base this morning after coffee. Some streets cannot be passed for the trees. Power lines are on the ground but we can drive over those now. They have no juice.

I was curious about how the museum interior held up. Well it is a complete mess. The wind came into the main hangar and blew the false ceiling down and with that came rain. Not so much rain but everything is damp at least. I took pictures. The airplane outside stayed put, mostly. The nose dock hangar is in bad shape one can walk right in. Zero security.

Our street sign was leaning against the hangar but a lot of the hangar wall fell on top, so now all is on the ground. Martinair hangar next door is badly damaged also. The future of the Ramey museum is in jeopardy.

Most folks here cannot remember earlier ferocious hurricanes. In 1928, there was a bad one, very similar to Maria. People have heard stories about that one, San Ciriaco, from their grandparents. Betsy, in 1956, ravaged this corner of the island and toppled many trees. More recent ones were mild—for Ramey—Georges in 1998, and Hugo in 1989.

Maria was much worse. The whole of Puerto Rico was affected. You folks out there probably have more and better news of the island’s fate than we have. We have no TV, even with electricity. No Internet, no telephone service of any kind. We are isolated. And one feeble AM radio station in Mayagüez. When one is isolated from the ‘outside world,’ one has no information. Beyond our little neighborhood and speaking with known neighbors and

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even with local strangers, we don't know anything. Rumors mostly. Talk about helplessness! We here have been pushed back in time into the 1800s. We know very little about the world beyond 20 miles. Still no TV, no news except on a weak radio station.

Reliable sources, however, tell us that half of the old lighthouse at Borinquen Beach is on the ground, that there are no more Crash Boat piers, and that the ocean invaded Crash Boat Beach almost to the parking lot. Mario Torres (Rescate Playas Borinquen) showed us photos. Perhaps tomorrow, Friday, we will explore to the south and try to learn about Miriam's family in Aguada. Still within that radius of 20 miles!

Speaking of contacts. A huge concern by most folks here, is how to let their families know that all is fine here among the chaos and devastation. Well, my friend Tavo Diaz over on Grubbs street—he is what is known on the island as a “Caw-peh-cuatro.” He is a radio amateur operator, a ham. I visited him in his ham shack and handed over a few names and phone numbers with short messages. He then calls his contacts. In this case other hams in the Dominican Republic, who then passed the messages on toward the states. I think Tavo has been busy these days. He was going to set up a different antenna so he could make direct contact with the states. The problem is, we cannot contact family or friends around the island as there is still no telephone service of any kind. Door to door is the only way to communicate with friends or family.

Today is Saturday morning time. No water, no electrics, no telephone of any

kind. We drove to Aguada again today to deliver a large tarp to Horacio. Half of his roof blew off. Galvanized sheet metal. Everyone told him to check it all well and secure the roof. Stubborn Horacio did not. No need, he said. He and Nelly had to move in with Hiram across the street. Everyone else got through the storm very well with just some water intrusion. Not so bad. Driving on the roads is quite an experience. Toppled trees, power poles, dangling wires, street lights, transformers, traffic lights and now, long lines waiting to get to a

*Talk about helplessness!
We here have been pushed back in time into the 1800s.
We know very little about the world beyond 20 miles.*

—Gerry Giles

valuable items: TV, computer, printer and some artifacts and books. Thankfully, there was not much water damage. We hauled these items over to the storage facility, which is now

containers and hauled them up the block on a borrowed hand truck to our house. Half full upon arrival.

I also had to check on little Lori Garfi, our itty, bitty 83-year-old friend who lives alone, fronting the golf course. I made a Cuba Libre for the both of us, with her rum and her Coke! But no ice. I offered her ice if she came over to my house. Sure, she said. She had to stop and visit with friend Alice of 89 years first. Alice was bed-ridden after a fall, while trying to wrangle a bucket of water in the bathroom. She fell on her right hip. She says



Photos/courtesy Gerry Giles

Hurricane Maria damaged the hangar that houses the Ramey museum, and played havoc with the trees, poles and facilities along Ramey's Engineer Orlando Alarcón Avenue-Hangar Road.

working gas pump. There is also a curfew in place to control looting. There have been cases of that. A mattress store has been liquidated that we know of. Gas siphoned from cars.

But despite no traffic lights at all, drivers have been very considerate. Slowly the streets are being cleared of trees, palm trunks and power poles—by local citizens. The whole island has been smashed. The economy will be severely hurt.

Miriam and I went to the museum to rescue the more

on a short schedule. Later, a small crew will need to help us peel off photos and catalog them, as well as items in the showcases. These will be taken to be stored properly in the facility. Space is limited there as well. What to do, what to do?

Miriam and I needed more flushing water and Carole Dyce has offered her pool as a source. But first we had to take a dip. Cold below and warm on top, and extremely green with lots of particles of plants. Almost ugly. We filled two

it is not broken, per her son, Paul, who is a nurse. But she can barely move her leg and she is in pain.

Later I stopped to visit Alice with Miriam and to bring Lori back to her house.

Lori does not remember me picking her up, nor the Cuba Libre, nor where she put her pocketbook (she did not bring it). Her memory is not there for recent events. Lori lost part of her wood roof of her porch with a view of the golf course.

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She and others need help, lots of help. Everyone makes the same comment, over and over we hear: at least we are alive.

The clock says the hour here is 2145. Almost bedtime.

Sunday, Sept. 24. Going on five days without the modern conveniences, except our cars which have gasoline. Which will arrive first? The water or the communications? Electricians will be long coming. Today was a beautiful tropical day to start and then rains arrived about three. And we took advantage of the free shower outside. Rain is warm, add a little soap, scrub and rinse. Pretty nice in the privacy of one's backyard! Water is the most precious commodity. We have lots of drinking, washing and cooking water we collected before the storm. We need flushing water and our other neighbor, Edwin Medina, offers water from his front yard pond. Each day in the morning we do some more cleanup in the yard, raking leaves, cutting branches, and



Photo/Gerry Giles
Aguadilla San Carlos Borromeo Church survived the storm, but the trees that stood in front of the church for decades didn't.

hauling it out to the street for pick up. Every day. Little by little—poco a poco.

Monday, Sept. 25. Day six without. The growing worst part now is going without a modern clothes washer. Even our electrical system cannot support such a machine. On the other hand, most of us run around doing our chores

Crash Boat Beach ... is no more, just a jumble of concrete, palm trees and rocks.

—Gerry Giles



Photo/Gerry Giles
Aguadilla's beloved Crash Boat Beach took a direct hit from Maria. The storm crumbled away part of the pier, and washed away the beach's sand up to what was the parking lot.

and errands in tropical attire: shorts and T-shirts. And a nice rain shower now and then does some rinsing. Go with the flow, eh?

A hazy morning. Rumors have circulated about another storm coming called Norris. Carefully listening to the operating radio channels now confirm there is no threat. That brings a sigh of relief.

There are many piles of branches of fallen trees along every street, big piles!

We do some more cleanup around our house until the sun overwhelms us. Too hot! We decide to

drive to Aguada to the family there and take water and ice. We drive out onto Highway 107 and see hundreds of people lined up at the Puma gas station waiting their turn to fill a container or a car. People are desperate for fuel, for their generators especially.

We detour to Crash Boat Beach. All is true if not worse. Most of the pier is now gone. The parking lot is now a sandy beach. The former beach is no more, just a jumble of concrete, palm trees and rocks. There is no beach! Where there was once a grand stretch of gorgeous tropical beach—one of the best and most popular on the island—is now a war zone. A few onlookers arrive with mouths open. Unbelievable! We drive down into the city. A tumble of trees along and over the streets. Wires, poles snagged everywhere. Downtown is in fair shape but the waterfront has been terrorized! The new railings of concrete are thrown onto the streets and sidewalks. What damage! We find more lines at other gas stations. Family members are fine, but would like cold water. Lucky them! We brought frozen bottles of water with us especially thinking of them.

We drove back to the base via highway 459 and Burns Road only to find Burns Road blocked by many trees near Pellot Pizza. One lone fellow was there trimming branches with his electric saw. In the short distance we could see one of the huge Air Force fuel tanks was crushed. Recovery will take months. I hope that the powers that be will wake up and realize that infrastructure must also be maintained as well as be built for use.

Water will be slow arriving in Aguadilla and adjacent towns. Carlos

►Continued from Page 8

Perez, a longtime friend and technical guy who works for the “Acueductos” (water company) says that a major problem is that the canal that supplies our local reservoir is trashed by fallen trees and needs to be cleaned out. A long section of the same canal is in the Guajataca Forest that can be accessed by foot or horseback. For years, plans have been put on paper to cover the canal, but. . . Also, the earthen dam where the canal originates has a crack in it, which is scary. Christmas may arrive before our water.

It is now 2109. We sat with our neighbors Nancy and Hernan to chat in the dark evening and check out the stars as well. A crescent moon to the west. A lovely evening. Under the ceiling fan we go. Buenas noches!

Tuesday, Sept. 26. A week has passed since we prepared for Maria’s arrival. Another hazy sky morning. We have cleanup chores in mind again. We sleep well thanks to our battery backup, we can use a cooling ceiling fan all night long. Rumors are that certain cellphones companies have towers that operate, but finding a ‘hot spot’ is another rumor. We heard of one on the fifth floor of the Marriott Hotel.

Once we understand the conveniences we don’t have, then we can work around them, and plan. Collecting water for toilets is one. Collecting clean water for internal use or bathing is another. Miriam planned and brought out every substantial pot in the kitchen for tap water. I brought over three empty five-gallon fountain jugs from the museum and filled those before also.

Those resources have held up well so far and we can manage another week

easily. Bathing with a half-gallon of water is creative. Food stuff is our least worry since supermarkets are now open. We have plenty of gasoline in our two cars to get around locally. We filled up a week ago. We also stocked up on cash ahead of time realizing that ATMs would no longer function.

Our only hassle is the lack of communication but we can go on without any contact. We just miss our Internet and telephone to assure family and friends of our situation.

Then there are the “howevers!” *Gasoline:*

Word is out that thieves in the night are punching holes in vehicle gas tanks for the precious fuel. We all must be vigilant. *Water:* No rain, so we must look farther. The National Guard showed up nearby with a 2,000-gallon water trailer and folks arrived with all sorts of containers and stood in line. Twice today so far. *Communications:* Not only amateur radio hams will send messages out, but it is more difficult to receive. Jeremy, our pilot neighbor, just arrived last night on his cargo flight from Curacao. Finally, as the airport here



Photo/Gerry Giles

Strong winds damaged the gas station, and flipped a container trailer, at the Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen gas station, next to the exchange.

was allowing incoming commercial flights. He asked if we needed to call anyone with a short message. Jeremy pulled out his satellite phone. Miriam called her sister in Florida and I tried, but got no answer, to call my sister in Washington.

Jeremy invited us to drop in later, four houses down, to share cold beers and air conditioning. He has a large diesel generator. Diesel fuel is difficult to find on the island but, scarcity is the mother of resourcefulness. Obtain a large quantity of Jet A aviation fuel, add in a certain amount of motor oil

and voilà, diesel fuel.

I remembered that the Davis’ house has Sirius radio receivers and I have an antenna and an amplifier from a computer. With a little finagling, I have all the items and all is operating as advertised! Now we can listen in on the world news.

But barely a mention about Puerto Rico where three million United States citizens reside without electricity. Humph! Island news on a local station is still scarce. *Body hygiene:* Carole Dyce’s pool was just cleaned and chlorinated today. What a wonderful pool! Cool and

refreshing. Bring your own soap to bathe out of the pool with a bucket, the quick rinse and splash in. Sensational! *Laundry:* Miriam knows how. A large pan of water, soap, a little Clorox, elbow grease and clean undies after drying on our solar clothes dryer. At least the undies.

Wednesday, Sept. 27. And Internet appeared! The oyster is our world!

Gerry y Miriam



Photo/Gerry Giles

One of Aguadilla’s iconic “yola” fishing was back to work a few days after the storm, ready to go fishing another day.



This is the back view of the Soundside Club and Commando Inn lodging facility. The club, and gazebo (bottom right) face Santa Rosa Sound.

Fort Walton Beach reunion

April 10-14, 2018, event in heart of Florida's sunny Emerald Coast

The Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association hosts its 2018 business meeting and reunion at Fort Walton Beach, Florida, April 10 to 14, 2018.

And the registration price is still just \$190.

The event site and headquarters is at the Hurlburt Field Soundside Consolidated Club and Visitors Center. It is co-located with the Commando Inn lodging facility.

"Locals call it the Soundside Club, or just Soundside," said Ella Moon, a manager at the club.

Soundside is also what people call the small and picturesque extension of Hurlburt that's home to the club. Next to the club is the Joint Operations Planning Facility. This small "base" lies directly across Highway 98 from the Hurlburt main gate. It has its own gate. The base marina is there. And it has a hiking trail, too.

"It's a nice facility—right on the water. It has big banquet rooms and a bar and grill, The Hooch, which has

food and drinks," reunion committee member Gail Cole said. "The hotel rooms are nice, and \$60 a night. It has a small beach and there are lots of trees. And you can go for a walk—there's a trail about 40 yards from the club."

The event headquarters—hospitality room—is the hub of activities. At Soundside, it will be in the Hartman Room. That's where administrative functions take place.

Members also meet there to socialize and grab a cold drink. And it's where silent auction items displayed.

"We have a few more things to shore up, but we're getting close to finalizing the reunion details," Association President Joyce Lanier said. "I do know that our members will get their money's worth. And they'll have time to relax and socialize a bit."

The final details of the reunion, with a complete itinerary, will be in the January 2018 of the *View From The Tower*.

In the meantime, here are the details we do have:

Arrival airport. There are three to choose from. Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS) is closest, about 15 miles from Hurlburt. Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) is about 65 miles away. And

Pensacola International Airport (PNS) is about 40 miles away. All have rental car agencies.

Base entry. No worries. Association member with or without a military ID card may enter the Hurlburt main base or Soundside for the reunion. Security police at both base gates will have a list of the members that may enter.

Reunion registration. That is at Soundside. It's where members get their badge, welcome packet and T-shirt. But the reunion committee still doesn't know if registration will be at the hospitality room or the lodging front desk.

Register early. Remember to circle, on the registration form (Page 11), what size and color T-shirt you want.

Lodging. The association reserved 35 rooms at the base's Commando Inn (21 are at Soundside), April 9 to 15.

Members may book rooms now. First come, first served.

Call (850) 884-7115 to reserve a room. Provide the RAFBHA group confirmation number: 20630098084. These details are also on the reunion registration form.

Register now. If you need a room for a person with special needs, remember to



Photos/Louis Arana

ask the reservation clerk.

Check in is at 2 p.m., check out at 11 a.m. Rooms have one queen bed only; private bathroom, television, microwave, mini fridge and coffee maker.

The price is right: \$60—much cheaper than off base.

Silent auction. "This event has never been more important, now that Hurricane Maria has virtually destroyed the Borinquen Field-Ramey Air Force Base Museum," Lanier said. "So, please, bring what you can. The money we make from the auction goes directly into helping reestablish our museum." Email her if you plan to donate something at mrzip@mtco.com.

Websites. These sites have more on the Emerald Coast: www.hurlburt.af.mil, <http://myhurlburt.com>, www.emeraldcoastfl.com, www.fwb.org, www.cityofdestin.com, www.visitpensacola.com

Remember—book early. Final reunion updates and itinerary will be in the January 2018 newsletter.

We challenge member to reach out, make contacts and try to bring one new member into our fold.

—Joyce Lanier
President



REGISTRATION FORM

Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association

2018 Annual Reunion

Hurlburt Field

April 10-14, 2018

Mary Ester, Florida

Note to attendees. Please write your full name exactly as it appears on your driver's license. We need full names for the clearance needed to enter all area of Hurlburt Field, Florida.

Guest 1 Full name:

Guest 2 Full name:

Name you want on your reunion name tag:

Name you want on your reunion name tag:

Street address:

City:

State:

ZIP:

Home phone:

Cell phone:

Email address:

Were you born at Ramey? (Circle one: Yes or No)

Year:

Under what name:

Reunion T-shirt-100% cotton-(Circle size and color):

Men: S M L XL White Grey Olive

Women: S M L XL White Grey Olive

Do you have any kind of special needs? Let us know:

Registration fee: It's still \$190 per attendee for mail ins—we haven't raised prices in eight years—if your registration form is postmarked by March 1, 2018.

Registration deadline/late fee: There is a \$10 late fee, per person registered, for forms postmarked after March 1.

Your fee:

(# of attendees, mailed in) _____ x \$190=\$_____

(# of attendees, PayPal) _____ x \$195=\$_____

(Late fee, if needed) _____ x \$10=\$_____

Total due: \$_____

Enclosed is my check or money order, made payable to RAFBHA, for the amount of: \$_____

I paid with PayPal

Mail payment and registration to:

RAFBHA

PO BOX 2841, East Peoria, IL 61611-0841

Accommodations:

•Lodging available NOW for all RAFBHA members at Hurlburt Field, Florida, **Soundside** or **Commando Inn**.

•35 rooms reserved; \$60 a night; 2 p.m. check in, 11 a.m. checkout.

•**Call NOW** (850) 884-7115 for reservations, taken 24 hours a day. First come, first served. If you need a room for a person with special needs, ask the reservation clerk.

•Use Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association's group confirmation number: **20630098084** — not RAFBHA.

•MWR website: <http://myhurlburt.com/index.html>



Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association
P.O. Box 2841
East Peoria, IL 61611-0841

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Please keep us in your thoughts

Are you a family member who gets this mailing for a deceased Ramey Air Force Base Historical Association member?

If so, please let us know.

Contact President Joyce Lanier at PO Box 2841, East Peoria, IL 61611-0841, or via email at: jlanier466@gmail.com

We want to recognize those members who served before us.



Photo/Gerry Giles

After the storm. Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico and blew big chunks off the Western Aviation Service Corp. hangar that's home to the Borinquen Field-Ramey Air Force Base Museum. The museum's Beechcraft Model 50 Twin Bonanza aircraft, battered down before the storm hit the island, survived. But the museum was not as lucky, and sustained heavy damage.