

## **Brief History of Tampa Bay Chapter 58 of The Retired Enlisted Association**

The Retired Enlisted Association chartered Tampa Bay Chapter 58 on March 16, 1988. The charter was the initiative of 13 military retirees: Andrew Baron, Harry J. Fish, Edward C. Nickerson, Robert J. Wallace Jr., Walter F. Bettin, Kenneth Hite, Frederick G. Burnham, Andrew H. Johnson, Arthur E. Smith, Harold A. Kerr, Earl C. Conner, Frank E. Thorsell and William F. Price. After a year of a nearly fruitless effort to get members to attend monthly meetings, the election of the first board of directors took place March 16, 1989. Then TREA National President George Carnes installed the chapter officers May 19, 1989, at the MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., Noncommissioned Officer Open Mess. W. B. "Mack" MacKall was the chapter's first president and George Blondet 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President.

The chapter incorporated with the Florida Department of State after Vice President Blondet prepared the chapter bylaws. This, for the first time, gave Tampa Bay Chapter 58 a firm structure. The chapter held its 1990-91 officers election in January 1990, and the board chose Vice President Blondet as the new president and he received approval to publish a chapter newsletter, "The Trooper."

At the 1990 TREA National Convention, the national board chose Tampa as the site of its 1992 convention. That same year, the chapter appointed representatives to Veterans Administration Volunteers Services at Tampa's James A. Haley and St. Petersburg's Bay Pines VA medical centers. In March 1991, the chapter formed the first State Council of TREA Chapters in Florida, one of the first in the nation.

Since its early days, the chapter has received its share of TREA National Awards for the work it has done. The TREA Outstanding Chapter President went to President Blondet for his work during 1991-1992. At the 29<sup>th</sup> TREA National Convention, The Trooper newsletter received a second-place award. At the 1992-1993 TREA National Convention at Colorado Spring, Colo., the chapter received the TREA Outstanding Chapter of the Year Award. TREA also named The Trooper, edited and published by Secretary Juanita Anspach, its top newsletter. The list of awards the chapter has earned over the past 25 years is long.

From the late 1990s to the early 2000s, the chapter had the TREA Tampa Bay Auxiliary Chapter 58, but it closed in 2002.

Since 1989, the chapter has had eight presidents: W.B."Mack" Mackall, 1989 to 1990; George Blondet, 1991 to 1994; Louis Arana, 1995 to 1997; Howard Buck, 1998 to 1999; William Biaggi, 1999; George Blondet, 2000 to 2002; Howard Buck, 2002 (resigned); Efren Pol, 2002 to 2004; Hermon Sharp, 2005 to 2008; and Louis Arana, 2009 to Present.