

Mrs. Field Artillery

Anna Lou Johnson to Retire

With 20 years of service to Army and Marine Field Artillerymen around the globe, Anna Lou Johnson, Managing Director of the US Field Artillery Association, will retire in Lawton, Oklahoma, on 31 December. Known throughout the FA Community as "Mrs. Field Artillery," Anna Lou became the Executive Secretary of the Association in 1980 with its rebirth, rising in 1994 to Managing Director.

Shortly after World War II, the Army withdrew funding from professional associations. In June 1950, the FA Association merged with the Infantry Association to become what is the present-day Association of the US Army (AUSA), and the FA Association's proud 40-year history stopped—at least for a while.

In 1974, the Commanding General of Fort Sill, Major General David E. Ott, worked to reorganize the Field Artillery Association. He ran into unfriendly regulations but found a loop hole that permitted the formation of the Field Artillery Historical Association under the auspices of the Fort Sill Museum Association. The Association was formed on 17 November 1974, the 199th anniversary of the founding of the US Field Artillery. Its first President was Lieutenant General (Retired) Harry H. Critz.

Then with the Commanding General of Fort Sill, Major General Jack N. Merritt, championing the cause, the association expanded into the reborn US Field Artillery Association for Army and Marine Field Artillerymen and formally became independent of the Museum Association in February 1980. The first general membership meeting was held in October.

Anna Lou Johnson came on board 1 January 1980 just as the Association was being reborn and was its first employer. She, along with General (Retired) Walter T. (Dutch) Kerwin, Jr., President of the Association from 1980 to 1996, was instrumental in the Association's growth. She was part of the energy and talent that moved the Association from scrawpled paper and pencils the first year to today's membership of 3,800 in 69 chapters worldwide.

Anna Lou describes the Association in 1980. "I started out in a small office with no windows on the ground floor of Scarby Hall, which used to be a troop barracks. My office was behind an old stage area, and it used to be a storeroom. It still had a big closet full of some other organization's stuff, I was right next to the Field Artillery *Jouvent* staff office, which was in the old barracks' kitchen—huge kitchen exhaust fan and all.

"I had a Government desk, chair, two filing cabinets and a trash can. My pencils, paper—everything I used to work for the Association—were borrowed. And that first year, if I couldn't scrounge something, I bought it out of my salary, which was just above minimum wage at that time.

"I did it then for the same reason I do it now—for the fun of it. If I had to describe the ideal job, Managing Director of the US Field Artillery Association would pretty well be it. I've had the opportunity to work with and for Field Artillerymen, the greatest people in the world. I have worked for such fine Redlegs as General Kerwin, President for 16 years, and the current President, Lieutenant General Ott.

"Everyday I come to work and have different activities. One day I balance the Association's books to the penny and the next day I fly to Washington, DC, for the Captial Cannoners' annual Field



Artillery Ball with our most senior leaders, active and retired. One day I count items in our inventory or order certificates and supplies and the next I brief the Pre-Command Course or present an Association award to the FA Drill Sergeant of the Year at the Training Center. I have worked with generations of Field Artillerymen of all ranks, who are my friends—some of whom have gone on to reach the highest levels of the

Army. It has been a wonderful job."

As she prepares to retire, Anna Lou is taking care of the Association behind her. She is responsible for the US Field Artillery Association's beautiful new suite of offices in Building 758, which faces Stone Hall along McNair Avenue. With the help of the Training Command, she secured the more visible location that's easier for Field Artillerymen to access and designed the renovations for the Association's functionality. This is just one of many of Anna Lou Johnson's legacies to the Association.

When asked what she feels are her biggest accomplishments, Anna Lou, with a characteristic wrinkle in her eyes, said, "We survived the first couple of years!" But she has much more than that to her credit. In 1983, then Major General John S. Crosby, Commanding General of Fort Sill, had her revamp the Saint Barbara awards program to worldwide instead of just for Fort Sill. Then in 1985, she helped initiate the corporate membership program and took on the Molly Pitcher Award, a small program in the Protocol Office at Fort Sill, and turned it into a Field Artillery-wide program. Her efforts have been quite successful as every adjutant and executive officer in the US Field Artillery can vouch for as they process awards each year for their commanders.

The program is so successful that getting through the Saint Barbara/Molly Pitcher awards season is Anna Lou's biggest challenge. "Eighty-five percent of our annual awards come in, in one six-week period each year: 15 October through the end of November. We really hustle to get those awards out the door and to our units to make their Saint Barbara's Day celebrations the best they can be."

Anna Lou says she's going to play more with her 10 grandchildren when she retires with husband, Bob. She's also going to catch up on several major projects she been too busy to do. And, after a rest, she's going to come back as a volunteer for the Officer Candidate School (OCS) Chapter of the US Field Artillery Association working in the OCS Hall of Fame and for the OCS Annual Reunion.

She said, "What is that song? 'Old soldiers never die, they just... Well, maybe, it's true about old Managing Directors too.' I suspect it will be a very long time before Mrs. Anna Lou Johnson fades out of the Association membership's memory.

On behalf of the US Field Artillery Association, for all you've done, thank you, Mrs. Field Artillery.

Editor



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY FIELD ARTILLERY CENTER AND FORT SILL
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FORT SILL, OKLAHOMA 73400-6001

REPLY TO
ATTENTION: GA

May 5, 2000

Mrs. Anna Lou Johnson

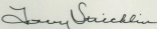
Dear Mrs. Johnson

On behalf of all Field Artillerymen worldwide, I would like to thank you for your two decades of devoted service to the United States Army and the Field Artillery.

In recognition of your extraordinary efforts to make the Fort Sill Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame a reality, we honor you today for your invaluable service. Without your tremendous patience and persistence, the building proudly named Durham Hall, which today is a fitting tribute to the many outstanding graduates of the Fort Sill Officer Candidate School, would simply not exist. Your dedication has guaranteed that a generation of officers commissioned through this school and their families will have a lasting monument to the countless contributions and sacrifices they have made to our great nation.

Additionally, your work as the Managing Director of the Field Artillery Association created a world class organization that proudly represents our artillery heritage and provides a path towards the future. As a direct result of your efforts, the Field Artillery Association has become a vital and important contributor to the wellness of our great branch, exemplifying the very ideals and values that made us the "King of Battle." Through the years of dedicated service, you have truly earned the nickname, "Mrs. Field Artillery."

In recognition of your untiring devotion and proud service to the Field Artillery and United States Army, I commend you and offer the thanks of all of Artillerymen whom you have touched through your steadfast efforts.


Tony Stricklin
Major General, USA
Commanding

ANNA LOU JOHNSON

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY AND MANAGING DIRECTOR

U.S. FIELD ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION

1 January 1980 – 31 December 1999