

# Greater Huntsville Section Attends Armed Forces Celebration and 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Redstone Arsenal Dinner

*By Ken Philippart*

*All images courtesy of Lisa Philippart except where marked*

The Greater Huntsville Section of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) attended the 2016 Armed Forces Celebration and 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Redstone Arsenal Dinner on June 30, 2016. The dinner capped a week-long celebration of the US armed forces and commemorated the diamond anniversary of Redstone Arsenal and its contributions to the

Huntsville community. The dinner marked the first time the Greater Huntsville Section participated in Armed Forces Week festivities and signaled the section's renewed outreach to and recognition of its military and Department of Defense constituencies.



*(L-R) Vice Chair Naveen Vetcha, John Lassiter, Ken & Lisa Philippart, Chris & Sheree Gay, Allison Cash, Anne & Rick Tuggle, Jan & Ron Miller  
(Image by Mr. Jeff White)*

Many communities in the United States celebrate Armed Forces Day. But Huntsville is renowned for supporting the military and sets aside an entire week to honor service members and Department of

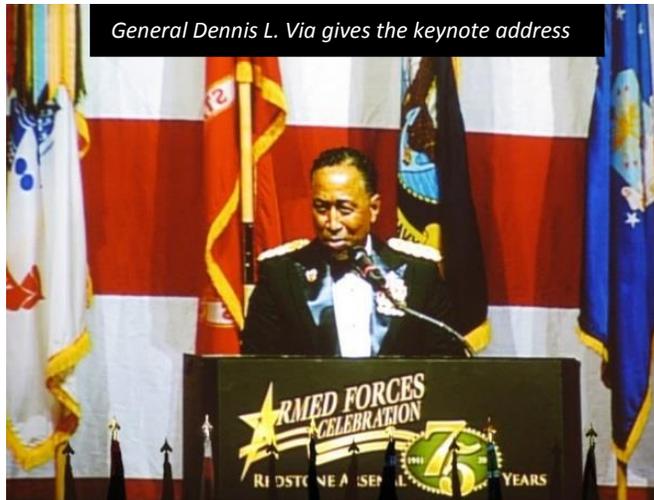
Defense personnel. The Greater Huntsville Section helped promote the week's activities, ranging from a formal proclamation signing and free concerts to a car show and formal dinner, through member e-mails and posting events on the section website.

Section members and military veterans John Lassiter and Ken Philippart hatched the plan to fill an AIAA table at the Armed Forces Week's capstone Armed Forces Celebration and 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner. Greater Huntsville's membership in the Huntsville-Madison County Chamber of Commerce enabled section members to attend the dinner at a greatly discounted rate. The call went out for attendees and AIAA members answered the call.



*Guests enjoy the festivities.*

Over 700 people attended the Armed Force Celebration and 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner and AIAA was well-represented. Ten AIAA members and guests registered as part of the section's contingent, exceeding the original goal of filling one table by spilling over onto a second. Other section members sat at their employers' tables, helping to wave the AIAA flag there as well.



The turnout was even more impressive given that this was AIAA's first time participating in this annual event.

The keynote speaker for the evening was General Dennis L. Via, Commanding General of the US Army Materiel Command. General Via began by recognizing all current and former military members in attendance and thanked them for their service. He then outlined a whirlwind history of Redstone Arsenal from its World War II beginnings as an ordnance plant to the birth of the US Army ballistic

missile program under Dr. Werner von Braun and subsequent creation of the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center to the leading edge, full-spectrum warfighter support that Redstone Arsenal provides to the military services today.

The US Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps entertained the crowd. The corps played a selection of 18<sup>th</sup> century military music with period-correct instruments while dressed in authentic, and colorful, colonial-era uniforms replete with powdered wigs.



AIAA members and guests who attended the event included Mr. Todd May, Director of Marshall Space Flight Center, section Vice Chair Dr. Naveen Vetcha, Lt Col (retired) John Lassiter, Lt Col (retired) Ken and Lisa Philippart, Ms. Sheree and Chris Gay, Dr. Ron and Jan Miller, Major Rick and Anne Tuggle, Ms. Allison Cash, and Colonel (retired) Buzz Toth.

Besides enjoying the dinner and the evening's pageantry, AIAA members did some serious networking, developing contacts for future tours of Department of Defense facilities and ideas for collaborating with other organizations on Redstone Arsenal.

The section's first participation in the Armed Forces Week festivities was a fun and resounding success. The Greater Huntsville Section salutes our military and Department of Defense members and all those who support them.

