



## SHAPE Officers' Association: Symposium 2012

After a number of years where the future of the SOA was in doubt, we celebrated our 52<sup>nd</sup> Symposium very successfully. In other words, the SHAPE Officers' Association has succeeded in changing and modernizing and thus adapting to the new situation in SHAPE and NATO.

As customary, we started with a meeting of the Executive Committee. This meeting was also attended by the chairman and vice-chairman of the American chapter of the SOA. Among other current issues, the committee discussed some final questions concerning the upcoming symposium, especially the scholarship issue which was finally decided. The committee approved the granting of two scholarships for this year and decided to dedicate one of these to Paul Chavarrie, a student at the SHAPE School from 1968-71, and son of LTGEN Edward Chavarrie (US Chapter).

The official part of our symposium started on Thursday 11 October with the "Happy Hour" in the Best Western Plus Hotel Casteau Resort, where the majority of our members from abroad also stayed. As usual, we were all happy to meet old friends again or to renew old acquaintances. So the atmosphere was friendly, congenial and the conversations with many different SOA members let us update on the happenings of the last 12 months.



The next day started with a ceremony. The members of the SOA gathered along the road that bears his name to honour General General Shalikashvili by dedicating a tree and a plaque to the former SOA president.

The chairman of the SOA Executive committee, Günter Bretschneider, gave a short speech recapitulating the important steps in General Shalikashvili's vitae.

John Shalikashvili was born June 27, 1936, in Warsaw, where his family had settled after fleeing the Soviet Union. His ancestors came from Georgia. At the end of the Second World War he and his family fled to Germany where they lived for several years before coming to the United States in 1952. After graduating from University in 1958 John Shalikashvili was drafted into the Army.



General Shali, as he liked to be called, holds the distinction of being the first naturalized American, first draftee, and first soldier commissioned through Officer Candidate School to rise to the highest ranks, to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In his tribute to General Shali, President Barack Obama wrote "...Shali's life was an *only in America* story."

His appointment as SACEUR from June 1992 to October 1993 brought him to SHAPE. He retired from the Army in 1997 and became the 4<sup>th</sup> President of the SHAPE Officers' Association till 2004.

John Shalikashvili died July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 at the age of 75 from complications of a stroke. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

After this short speech General Carstens, former Chief of Staff at SHAPE, recalled some of his experiences with General Shali, pointing out the serious professionalism and dedication to the Alliance and the deep sense of humor the General displayed in his daily life at SHAPE.

At 1015 hours the General Assembly started presided by Günter Bretschneider. After the Welcome Remarks by the chairmen of the ExCom and the US and GE Chapters, the General Assembly was asked to confirm the present ExCom. This was followed by the status report by Günter Bretschneider, the membership status and the ExCom activity report.



One of the highlights of this morning was the SOA Scholarship Award ceremony which was chaired by Scott Sunquist as chairman of the scholarship committee.



This year's two scholarships were awarded to David Brackett (Paul Chavarrie Scholar). He was a SHAPE Highschool Honour Roll student, participated in Model UN, Model NATO and the Model US Senate. David is attending Fairleigh-Dickinson University, New Jersey with a double major in Political Science (IR emphasis) and Spanish and was invited to join Global Studies Program of the University. His goal is a career with NATO in the Mediterranean Region. Paul's mother was present and accepted the scholarship certificate.

The second scholarship was awarded to Brynne Coleman. She graduated from Prattville HS, VA Graduate (National Honor Society), participated in Model US Government and Student Government. Presently she is attending Missouri University of Science and Technology, majoring in Aerospace Engineering. Brynne has extensive overseas experience (Father in US Air Force) and has already been recognized by Boeing Women in Science & Engineering Award.

Following was the Financial Report given by the Assistant Treasurer Christiane Hermant. The Financial Report was approved by the General Assembly.

The final topic of this morning was the Way Forward, the activities planned for 2013. On the agenda are the information of the SHAPE NMR Echelon about SOA, the plans to refine SOA Scholarship criteria based on 2012 experience, host (at least) two social functions for members residing in Belgium. Finally the date for the 53rd Symposium and General Assembly was set for 11 October 2013.

After a pleasant time over lunch in the SHAPE Club, the afternoon was taken by fascinating briefings. Colonel Jesper Momme (DNK), Leader of the Implementation and Advisory Team



(IAT) for the CCOMC talked about the Comprehensive Crisis and Operations Management Centre, a fascinating subject giving us an insight into new structures and tasks.

LtCol Dariusz Kacperczyk, the SOA's liaison officer in the SHAPE Public Affairs Office, provided the audience with an

update briefing about ongoing NATO operations.



The symposium ended with our formal dinner at the Ecole Hôtelière Provinciale. As usual, the dinner was of high quality and satisfied even the most discerning palates among us. The Saturday was customarily filled with two activities, one in the cultural domain with a visit to the town of Bruges, the other with the traditional Golf tournament. With these events the 2012 Symposium of the SOA ended on a very positive and successful note.

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