

Videmus Omnia



55th STRAT RECON WING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1999

NEXT REUNION RENO OR BUST ! 29 SEP TO 2 OCT 99

The 55th SRW Association will hold its 20th reunion in Reno, NV, from Wednesday, 29 September through Saturday night, 2 October 1999. Mark your calendar now and begin making plans to attend.

Reunion Chairman Don Gurney and his committee have planned a program guaranteed to be another memorable gathering of former and current 55thers, friends and associates.

Harrah's Hotel/Casino will be reunion headquarters in "The Biggest Little City in the World." The room rate is \$72.00 per night.

Registration for the reunion will begin on Wednesday 29 September, as will male (and female) bonding, the telling of tall tales and intense camaraderie in the hospitality room.

Planned events include:

* On Thursday the obligatory golf outing and a trip to historic Virginia City .

* Friday there is a scenic luncheon cruise on Lake Tahoe aboard the paddle wheeler *MS Dixie*.

* The grand finale banquet is slated for Saturday night, 2 October, at Harrah's Auto Museum, a unique venue.

* The general membership business meeting, time and place to be announced later, will be convened for the purpose of electing members of the Board of Directors, select site and dates for the next reunion, and conduct other necessary Association business.

Updated details on registration and other information will be forthcoming in the next issue of *Videmus Omnia*.



Internetters can stay apprised of reunion news by logging onto the Association's home page at www.55srwa.org.

The timing of the reunion should promise ideal weather, is after the summer season and before the skiing rush. **Be there. Let's do it!!** By Max Moore and edited by Ben White

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Where does the auto industry find all those empty roads to film those commercials?

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

A happy and prosperous 1999, 55thers.

My sincere hopes that your holiday season brought joy and happiness to you and your families around the world. It was truly a time for thanksgiving, as our country seems determined to continue to set new records in every way. Economic prosperity abounds, the likes of which no one could predict, while the rest of the world is in economic chaos. Meanwhile in Washington, D.C., our government, led by our president, has created a mess of historic proportions. Oh well, this too will pass. We're still the greatest nation in the world and, as the song goes, "I'd gladly stand up next to you and defend her here today; **God Bless the USA.**"

Since our last newsletter, there is a lot of good news to report about our Association. Through the smooth efforts of **Errol Hoberman**, our Treasurer, who doubles as the membership chairman, the number of members in good standing (paid up dues) has swelled almost 100% since last January. **Great work, Errol!**

Actions taken by your Board of Directors and/or the "Omaha Caucus" include the following:

* Approved the donation of \$2000 to the [US Air Force Museum](#) to help restore an RB-47H aircraft, tail number 4299.

* **Robb Hoover** hosted a symposium on 12 September at the SAC Museum entitled "*Cold War in Flames*" and packed the house with attendees from all over the U.S. The subject is covered in a detailed article later in this issue.

* **Robb, Max Moore** and I were actively engaged with the 55th Wing's Heritage Committee, which worked on memorializing heroes of the 55th Wing all the way back to its inception in 1941 as the 55th Pursuit Group. The results of this work include a beautiful book containing the biographies of 19 individuals, and a lithograph, the center of which consists of a collage of aircraft flown by the 55th, and portraits of the 19 heroes on two side panels. It is a magnificent work of art. Each litho is signed by the 19 honored individuals, and numbered. This is a wonderful tribute to the Wing's great history. The original lithograph was unveiled at the Birthday Ball. **The lithographs are available for purchase for \$60.00. Price includes the litho and the bio book.** About 200 were sold before the Ball and sales were brisk during that evening. You can order through me, or through Wing POC, Captain Michelle Curry (ref. The 55th SRWA web page).

* Robb Hoover proposed, and the Board approved the purchase of a framed Heroes lithograph to be given to the Offutt Officers Open Mess, to be hung outside the Raiders' Lounge, or at

another agreed upon site in the Club.

* The Board also approved the purchase of 720 commemorative wine glasses. Each glass has the words "*Fightin' 55th 1999 Birthday Ball*", and next to it, a bald eagle's head over the American flag. Under that is an etching of the Association dual shield pin. A glass was placed at each dinner position at the Birthday Ball. This donation by the Association cost \$1,800.

* The "Omaha Caucus" hosted a dinner with the new 55th Commander, **Brigadier General Ron Sams**, on 1 December. I'm happy to report that he is anxious to be involved with the Association and to take advantage of this very supportive manpower pool.

If you have not had a chance to read the articles by **Bruce Bailey** on the web page, you're really missing something. Bruce, you have enlightened us and entertained us with your storytelling prowess. Thanks for sharing them with us and please continue.

It was great to see so many members at the Birthday Ball. Don't procrastinate, order you're your 55th historical lithograph today.

One of the orders of business at the Reno reunion will be to decide where to have the next reunion. If you have always wanted to host the reunion in your neighborhood, please let me know so we can key you to the things you'll need to research. Once you have done the research and get the info back, the Board can then discuss the matter and have some preliminary decisions made before its brought before the membership. **Put the Reno reunion dates on your calendar, and we'll see you**

**in Reno! *Videmus Omnia,*
Bill Ernst**

PS: The Society of the Strategic Air Command will host its **final** reunion here in Omaha on 12-15 July 2000. Some thought is being given to having an out-of-sequence **55th SRW Association** reunion in conjunction with this event. It promises to be a grand reunion with festivities including: two-day golf and tennis activities, barbecue and a gala ball at the new SAC Museum. Stay tuned.

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RB-47H NR. 4299 FINDS A HOME AT USAF MUSEUM

Those of us old enough to have flown aboard the RB-47H, and not so senile as to have forgotten that memorable experience, can take pleasure in knowing that one venerable aircraft, tail number 4299, has found a home at last.

The beat-up old bird arrived at the restoration area of [Air Force Museum](#) on Wright-Patterson AFB near Dayton, OH on 31 July 1998. At least the fuselage did. Wings, engines and other parts came as late as 23 September after years of neglect and deterioration while on display at Salina, KN.

Restoration work began almost immediately in cleaning it up in order to get it out of the weather and inside the restoration facility where it currently resides. The ravages of the elements in Salina left piles of dirt, pine needles, bird and animal leavings, and other debris throughout the aircraft. It had suffered dents and

other damage from extensive vandalism, as well.

The 55th is the only Air Force unit to make operational use of the RB-47H. The first H model arrived at Forbes in early 1955, and transition from the RB-50 was completed in 1956. The Wing flew the H until the last one was retired in December 1967. The Wing moved from Forbes AFB, KS, to Offutt in 1966 where it converted to the RC-135, which it flies yet today.

The future holds the promise of getting 4299 back into the *“Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth”* shape of its heyday. Ultimately, it will be the centerpiece of a planned [AF Museum Cold War](#) display, which will be housed in a yet-to-be-built building as funding permits.

The schedule for restoration is still in development. Once a date for completion of the Cold War building is determined, the time line will be backed in from there to be sure 4299 is ready at opening. But the staff (and volunteers) are working diligently and are confident it can be done effectively. Many of the replacement parts and panels will come from a cut-up B-47 currently in storage at Ellsworth AFB, ND, and will be “remove and replace” type work. Once the work begins in earnest, possibly next spring, it should move rapidly.

The only other known RB-47H on display is tail number 4296 at the Eglin AFB Museum in Florida. It has been cleaned and painted and is presentable, but not authentically restored. That aircraft, flown by the 55th at Forbes, was later used by General Dynamics as a test bed for ECM equipment designed for the F-111. Its nose was modified for testing, then, once at Eglin’s museum, it

was refitted with a bomber nose and painted black to resemble an H model.

John (“Jack” or “Ernie”) Kovacs, a former RB-47 jockey in the 55th during the Forbes era, is retired and living in Fairborn, OH, and is our ‘man on the spot’. He has visited the restoration

area several times and has had contact with **MGen (USAF Retired) Charles Metcalf**, Director, USAF Museum; **Dean Kallander**, Air Force Museum Historian; **Dave Menard**, Museum Research Division; and **Gil Vaillancourt**, head of Restoration. Jack reports all of these guys are excited about having 4299 and the prospects for its restoration. The Museum hierarchy is pleased to have an aircraft with “character,” a history and one that actually performed a job rather than having stood in readiness to perform.

Jack said that it is unusual for the research and restoration personnel to meet and hear from former flyers of museum aircraft during the restoration phase. Usually, he says, it occurs after planes go on display.

The AF Museum people would appreciate receiving any information, photos, “war stories”, etc. about 4299 anyone might wish to contribute to the research. Same should be sent to:

USAF Museum/MUA,
Research Division
2601 E Street
Wright-Patterson AFB,
OH, 45433-7609

(Put Reference: RB-47H 4299 INFO on any material and envelopes you send.)

On 1 September 1998, **Jack**, along with **Wil Main, Dick Scott and Bill Grimes**, on behalf

of the **55th SRW**

Association,

presented a check for \$2,000 to

MGen Metcalf, as a donation

toward the funding for the restoration of 4299 and the Cold War display. Such funding usually comes fifty percent from Congress and the other half from corporate, organizational and private donations.

MGen Metcalf presented to the group an overview of the plans for the aircraft and its future display. They invited the general to attend the reunion in Reno and to make a similar presentation on the progress and plans for the project, and he graciously accepted.

For those of you who may visit the AF Museum before the Cold War display is a reality, you are advised that the restoration area is accessible and not difficult to get to. It is in an area past a hangar row on Wright-Pat and west of the Presidential Aircraft Display Annex building (It has a large picture of Wilbur and Orville on it). A pass and map to that annex may be obtained at the main museum, and the Department of Defense decal on your vehicle will permit access, as well.

Jack has volunteered his help in getting you there. Call him at (937) 879 1390 (reasonable hours, please). He lives just 12 minutes from the Museum. You can also reach him via e-mail at



jl2c3k@aol.com. It's worth the trip. Allow a day to see the entire museum and the annex.

Material contributed by Jack Kovacs, Craig Kibbe and Bruce Bailey. Compiled and edited by Max Moore and Ben White.

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THE SOLDIER

It is the soldier, not the reporter,
Who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the soldier, not the poet,
Who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the soldier, not the campus organizer,
Who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.

It is the soldier
Who salutes the flag,
Who serves beneath the flag,
And whose coffin is draped by the flag,
Who allows the protestor to burn the flag.

Father Denis Edward O'Brien, USMC

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QUESTION OF THE DAY

One of Winston Churchill's most often repeated public statements was, "never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

Most everybody with any interest in the military knows he was referring to the debt owed by the British people to their Royal Air Force, who had won the Battle of Britain.



But, here's the question: What actually did the RAF do to earn this accolade?

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STAFF? YES; DISTAFF. WOMEN IN THE 55TH WING

What comes to mind when you hear "U.S. Air Force?" Flying airplanes? Combat? History? High tech equipment? Great people? Opportunity? Probably a combination of all of these.

What about when someone mentions the 55th Wing at Offutt? The largest operational wing in the U. S. Air Force, it has a long and distinguished history replete with tradition, outstanding people, lots of flying, high tech equipment and opportunity. These traits have not changed throughout the 55th's history.

A lesser-known feature, is that women have always been a part of the 55th, and continue to contribute worldwide throughout the entire spectrum of job opportunities and assignments.

In the early years of the Air Force, women filled many of the 'traditional' support positions, such as secretary, supply corps or nurse. There were also some female support pilots, instructors and doctors. As the Air Force grew, the 55th grew, and the opportunities for women followed suit. But it wasn't until the early 1990s, when Congress began lifting restrictions on women in combat, when women, including those in the 55th Wing, began filling operational combat and combat support positions in the Air Force. Today, women in the 55th

enjoy the same opportunities as men, working side-by-side with male counterparts in the air and on the ground.

The 55th has women flying combat and combat support missions worldwide. They include pilots, navigators and electronic warfare officers (EWOs) and linguists. Whether a line flyer, instructor or evaluator, or maintainer, women comprise an integral part of the 55th team effort in accomplishing its missions.

Of the 27 female aviators currently in the 55th, eight are pilots (four of whom are aircraft commanders), four are navigators, three are EWOs and twelve are linguists.

The 55th lays claim to having had among its ranks the first female RC-135 EWO with combat flying time. **First Lieutenant Sheila O'Lear (now Kirkwood)** was one of the 55th's honorees at the Wing Birthday Ball in January 1999. During Desert Storm, Lt. Kirkwood flew as the Rivet Joint Tactical Coordinator, becoming one of the U.S. military's first females in a combat environment.

Along with flying the line, there are opportunities for staff and supervisory positions worldwide. These include executive officer and flight commander. Since the concept of women in 55th flying jobs is relatively recent, some, especially in the minds of retired strategic reconnaissance folks, may wonder what it's like to fly with a female 'crewdog.' Actually, things haven't changed that much. The job requirements and performance standards remain the same whether male or female. Although the younger generation may be more accustomed to working with women, the more experienced

folks also appreciate the change. According to one field grade aviator, "Each person, man or woman, brings his or her individual talents to the squadron and they are assessed based on their capability and performance in the job, not on their gender."

The backgrounds of the 55th's flying females are as diverse as their jobs. Most female aviators went to flight or technical training directly from their commissioning source (USAFA, OTS or ROTC) or basic training. A few have had prior Air Force experience in the intelligence field, public affairs or information analysis, and one is a former 'heavies' crew chief.

Other opportunities for women include flight surgeon and flight nurse positions. These jobs provide the best of two worlds: combining flying and medicine. **Col (Dr) Helen Fronefield**, a flight surgeon since 1990 and the current 55th Medical Group Commander, is the first female medical group commander to serve at Offutt. Since entering the Air Force in 1977, she has seen the opportunities grow for women in the military, particularly in military aviation. "The Air Force is a good opportunity for anyone. A person is paid based on rank, time in grade, and achievement. Not gender, race or any other outside factor," said Col Fronefield. "It's not always that way in the civilian world."

In the future, women will continue to hold all sorts of positions in the 55th. Gone are the days when women were limited in job selection. Whether a young girl wants to fly aircraft, analyze electronic signals, save lives, or command an operational squadron, the opportunities will still be here in the 55th. Col Fronefield summed

it up best: "It's what you make of it. Do the job and it doesn't make a difference if you wear a skirt or pants."

*Contributed by
Capt Elizabeth Kurey, EWO
(Raven Three) 343rd Sq, 55th Wing*



CARDS & LETTERS

Dear Ben,

The latest (and one of the best) newsletters from the 55th SRW Association. I read with interest your article on Col. Lassiter. (His correct initials were O.F.) and that recitation rang a few familiar bells.

In March of 1956 during the tail end of winter in eastern Kansas, FIGMO, I was seeking space on most any flight as we had to keep up minimum flying requirements, whether the plane had anything to do with ELINT not withstanding. And I managed to get some sand-bag time on KC-97s, C-45s, C-47s, but no, not on RB47s as one had to attend MTD for that privilege and that was not an option for me, thus denying me forever a chance to fly on that graceful airplane.

Someone mentioned a 2-3-day TDY on a C-47 to Santa Monica. I signed up not knowing why a C-47 was embarking for a civilian field in Hollywood.

On reporting to the plane, I observed a big truck unloading what appeared to be a large coffin. It turned out, rather, to be a custom-made high fidelity set fit for a king. At least 12 feet long replete with large built-in speakers and what was then state-of-the-art equipment. Who, we chatted, would be the recipient of this?

As we pulled up on the Santa Monica ramp, an entourage

of people appeared with a truck. I noted a very fancy convertible and who should leap out but Allan Jones, there to personally receive the booty, which we learned was a gift from Col. Lassiter to his old buddy. We all pitched in to load the sound equipment onto the truck. As we departed the area we observed Jones' convertible tearing down the street in pursuit of the truck.

Your recall of his (Lassiter's) career with "Executive Jet Aviation" is fairly accurate but you did not include all the famous aviators who were involved with EJA as stockholders. They included Jimmy Doolittle, James Stewart, Curtis LeMay and Col. Tibbets, the AC of the *Enola Gay*.

One day in the late seventies, I picked up a copy of *Business Week* which had a story on EJA, a company that apparently was quite successful and which had offices around the world. Re-enter Lassiter. He was found dead in a hotel room in mysterious circumstances. It happened, I recall, in either Geneva or Zurich, Switzerland. There was no real follow-up that I recall, but perhaps the bizarre death of our old wing commander was in keeping with his expansive lifestyle. Who knows?
Ray Bottom



Cards and letters should be addressed to:

**Ben White
628 Skimmer Court
Corolla, NC 27927
Or: E-mail to**

benwhite@beachlink.com



Life is like a dog-sled team. If you ain't the lead dog. The scenery never changes.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION OF THE DAY

In August of 1940, with 260,000 German ground troops were poised on the continental shore of the English Channel prepared for an invasion of Britain, Hitler's Luftwaffe commenced massive bombing raids against targets in the U.K. Hermann Goering's air armada included 1,400 bombers and 1,000 fighters.

Against this formidable attack force, the Royal Air Force could muster 900 fighters, Spitfires and Hurricanes.

The first massive Nazi raid began on 13 August 1940 and continued until 30 June 1941. Helped greatly by the magical new device called radar, the RAF could detect approaching attacking planes at a distance of up to 75 miles.

Heroic and exhausted RAF pilots, many 18 or 19 years old, racked up incredible scores against German bombers. On 14 August 1940 they downed 144 out of 1,000 raiders. On 15 September they shot down 185. On 22 June 1941, they destroyed a mere 26.

RAF bombers also totally stunned the Fuhrer by hitting German cities, including Berlin. This was totally beyond Britain's capability, Goering had assured him. Those raids persuaded the Germans to reduce the size of their raids on the U.K. in order to retain fighters to protect the fatherland.

After 30, June 1941, aircraft raids against Britain, though still fatal to thousands, were greatly reduced and replaced by V-1 missiles beginning in June of 1944 and V-2 missiles three months later. Hitler needed his fighters and bombers to support his invasion of Russia.

The invasion of England never took place. The Battle of Britain was won.

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SECOND QUESTION OF THE DAY

What was the first U. S. Air Force jet fighter to go into production and when did it do so?

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T A P S



- Ralph Abreau**
- Anna T. Adams**
(Wife of Ralph E. Adams)
- Raymond P. Britton**
- Lew Critchfield**
- Clayton Earl**
- Alan R. Hansen**
- June Harte Kreh**
(Wife of Eldon B. Kreh)
- William L "Bill" Woodin**

Note: Members are requested to report the demise of members and former members of the 55th SRW and/or their spouses to the Association secretary. Also please give the name and address of the next of kin so that a condolence

card may be sent by the president. The Association Secretary is Ben White (See address info under "Cards and Letters")

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ANSWER TO 2ND QUESTION OF THE DAY

The U.S. Army Air Forces announced on 7 January 1944 that the Bell P-59 Aircomet had gone into production.

Source: *Chronicle Of The 20th Century*

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No matter how well people carry their years, they're sure to drop a few occasionally.

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SYMPOSIUM: COLD WAR IN FLAMES

With **George Back's** vivid painting of a North Korean MiG attacking an RB-47 setting the stage, a sold-out symposium audience of more than 200 listened to compelling stories of airborne reconnaissance from those who flew the missions and those who continue to analyze the historical record. The new SAC Museum was the venue, on 12 September 1998, for the review which covered post-World War II through the 1960s, a period cited as "The Cold War in Flames" by **Dr. John Farquhar**.

John Farquhar has sterling credentials: a 55th SRW veteran, an

Associate Professor of History at the Air Force Academy and a PhD, whose subject for his doctoral dissertation was Cold War Reconnaissance.

He led off the symposium with a presentation on the origins of post-World War II airborne reconnaissance with details on specific programs. He cited the pioneering work of **Major Maynard White's** 46th Reconnaissance Squadron at Ladd Field, Alaska, the first operational reconnaissance outfit in postwar SAC. The 46th flew the F-9 (RB-17) and the F-13 (RB-29). John gave credit to the 46th. for having accomplished the radar mapping of the Arctic flying out of Thule, Greenland. (This was an activity for which **Howard P. Smith, MGen, USAF Ret.**, was honored at the recent Birthday Ball).

He also recounted the B-17 ferret missions inserted into the traffic flow during the Berlin Airlift in 1948. Those aircraft monitored allied flights in the corridors between West Germany and Berlin and would report aircraft problems to the tower.

Greg Skavinski told the story of 10 shoot downs of US Air Force and Navy reconnaissance aircraft during the Cold War each of which involved some crew members whose fate has never been resolved. Greg's uncle was one of those who perished when an RB-29 was downed by Soviet fighters in the Sea of Japan on 13 June 1952. Through Greg's efforts that crew was awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses and Purple Hearts, posthumously. Greg has donated his collection of aircraft models and research material related to those 10 incidents to the SAC Museum where they now form a special

exhibit. This material previously had been displayed at CIA and DIA.

Colonels John McKone and Bruce Olmstead, USAF, Ret., recounted the details of their being shot down in the Barents Sea on 1 July 1960, and their subsequent incarceration in the infamous Lubyanka Prison in Moscow. They made a special tribute to the courageous wives of the crew members who sat in the front row at the at the UN hearings in New York. At those hearings the Russian representative tried to rebut US Ambassador to the UN Henry Cabot Lodge's claim that the RB-47 was over international waters when shot down. The wives maintained their resolve and were stoic and unemotional when confronted with typical Soviet Cold War bombast, even though they did not then know the fate of their husbands.

John and Bruce provided a bit of humor when they recalled that after their release from prison and return to the US, some finance office zealots tried to reclaim the TDY pay advanced them prior to their departure from Forbes. The claim was that 'rations and quarters' had been provided them while they were rotting in Lubyanka. Supported by the strong championing of their case by then **55th Strat Recon Wing Commander, Colonel Bill Kyle**, an accommodation was finally reached with the 'bean counters.'

Lieutenant Serge Sherman, USN, of the Defense POW-MIA Office presented an update on recent searches of Soviet archives and his visits to Russia. A Russian linguist, Serge recently returned from a survey of cemeteries on the Kola Peninsula

where he looked for any evidence of burial of the remains of McKone and Olmstead's fellow crewmembers: EWOs **Oscar Goforth, Dean Phillips and Eugene Posa**. That search will continue on future trips. However, Serge noted, there is little likelihood of final closure since the Soviet system was based on duplicity. Even the official archives from that era often contain what the recorder believed the higher-ups wanted the record to show, or what was politically expedient, rather than the unvarnished truth.

Gary Powers, Jr., whose resemblance to his father is so uncanny as to evoke a time warp, recounted the story of the U-2 shoot down over Sverodvinsk on 1 May 1960 and the subsequent trial. **Gary Powers** had been a SAC F-84 pilot at Turner AFB, Georgia in 1956 when he volunteered for a "special mission program-risky but patriotic." That proved to be the U-2 program, shrouded in secrecy and directed by the CIA. Air Force pilots accepted for this duty were 'sheepdipped,' i.e. magically transformed into civilians for the duration of their CIA employment. Their Air Force 'discharges' were kept in the desk of the Secretary of the Air Force so that they could be quickly reinstated without a break in their Air Force service when their hazardous duty with the CIA was terminated. President Eisenhower didn't want uniformed crewmembers subject to the grave legal implications of an over flight, shoot down and capture.

Gary Powers, Jr., has since, however, been able to have his father posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, a military decoration, for "extraordinary achievement while

participating in aerial flight 1 May 1960. This medal, approved in 1986, is “by order of the Secretary of the Air Force.” Gary Powers, Jr. has formed a Cold War Museum foundation and is currently seeking funding to further the concept.

Dr. Robert Hopkins, a 55th SRW veteran and specialist in diplomatic history, gave a *tour de force* on the critical role that airborne reconnaissance played in providing early Cold War intelligence and in debunking the so-called ‘Missile Gap’ when some believed the Russians had acquired missiles exceeding those held by the US. Krushchev’s thundering to the contrary, intelligence based upon detailed collection by the reconnaissance fleet provided irrefutable evidence that the US was well ahead in offensive and defensive missile capability. Robert’s tribute to the veterans of the RB-17, RB-29, RB-45, RB-57, RB-50, RB-47 and U-2 programs was presented with respect and profound insight into the hostile realities and the dangers to the reconnaissance crews. He stated that many revisionists in academia have other views, but that simply redoubles his resolve. Hopkins also noted that today’s students arrive at their colleges with a high school background almost bereft of understanding or any comprehension of the Cold War. His mission, he said, is to provide them with a realistic context and historical basis for understanding how the Cold War and its outcome affects the world in which we live.

Cargill Hall, the premier chronicler of over flights of the Soviet Union and Chief Historian of the National Reconnaissance Office, chaired a panel discussion on the impact of Cold War reconnaissance. **John Bergen**,

SAC intelligence veteran and Cold War scholar, and **David Haight**, archivist for the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, KS, joined as panel members. Cargill spoke to the compelling national interest (Pearl Harbor must never again happen) that drove Presidents Truman and Eisenhower in supporting sensitive programs for the collection of vital intelligence data.

Bergen provided insight on the Cuban Missile Crisis and the application of intelligence in supporting war plans. He noted that by the late 50s, spurred by the shock of Sputnik, US technology was in full development mode. The dawn of operational intelligence satellites in the early 60s did not obviate the need, however, for the peripheral programs, as several wars, shaky cease fires and rogue nation belligerence continue to demonstrate.

Haight discussed the role of Presidential Libraries and their continuing declassification of sensitive documents in response to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. These include subjects of considerable interest to both scholars and the general public. He offered examples or recently declassified material and encouraged public contact and visits to Presidential Libraries.

Attendees included **Hank Dubuy**, copilot, **Bob Rogers**, navigator, and **George Back**, EWO – crewmembers on RB-47 #290 which was severely damaged by North Korean MiG gunfire over the Sea of Japan on 28 April 1965. Copilot Hank Dubuy returned fire from the tail guns and dispatched one of the attackers. The crew autographed prints of Back’s painting of this attack. An effort is underway through congressional

channels to gain official credit for Hank with a MiG shoot down based upon eye witness testimony, recently declassified, of the aircraft commander, **LtCol Hobart Mattison, USAF, Ret.**

Pat Phillips, her daughter **Roxanne**, and **Maria Goforth McAtee** attended the symposium where they reunited with 55th veterans and friends. The whereabouts of the remains of the three EWOs (Phillips, Goforth and Posa) remain unresolved. The body of the aircraft commander, Palm, was returned to US custody by the Soviets, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Gail Olmstead and **Norma McKone** joined their husbands at the proceedings and the events that evening.

John Roche, sole survivor of the shoot down of **Stan O’Kelly’s** RB-50 on 29 July 1953 in the Pacific off Vladivostock, also attended. John lives in northern Nebraska and tends his collection of Model Ts.

The peripatetic **LtGen C. Norman Wood, USAF, Ret.**, (‘Norm’ to those of us who knew him as an RB-47 crew when he crawled to work on his hands and knees), attended the symposium. He is now the Chief Executive Officer of Armed Forces Communications Electronics Association (AFCEA) and covers the globe nurturing new chapters in places like Poland and the Czech Republic. Norm rose to the highest level in the military of any of those who started their careers in that humble posture inching through the crawlway.

Don Sonnek, a Navy ordnanceman on a P-2V(5) Neptune, was in the audience. Don’s Neptune was attacked by Russian MiGs in June 1955 and

crash-landed on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Straits. Don was asked to attend because we Air Force veterans know well that there is a Navy side to the Cold War reconnaissance story which also deserves full airing.

LtCol Ron Maynard, USAF, Ret., Defense POW-MIA Office North Korean specialist, also attended. Ron was an RC-135 flyer earlier in his career. He has visited North Korea as part of the US delegation seeking to learn about Korean War MIA cases.

The Cold War in Flames symposium was sponsored by the SAC Museum and co-sponsored by the Strategic Roost, Association of Old Crows; Society of the Strategic Air Command; Nebraska Humanities Council; Omaha World Affairs Council; and the 55th SRW Association. A video recording of the proceedings (a three-cassette set) is available for \$49.95. To place an order, call **Sara McFarland** at the SAC Museum: 1 – 800 - 358 - 5029, extension 211.

The symposium was adjourned with a quote of President Ronald Reagan's profound statement which is carved on the obelisk donated by the 55th SRW Association and which greets visitors to the SAC Museum: *"We must never forget that freedom is never really free; it is the most costly thing in the world. And freedom is never paid for in a lump sum. Installments come due in every generation . All any of us can do is offer the generation that follows a chance for freedom."* By Robb Hoover



People used to solve their problems over coffee and cigarettes. Now **that is** their problem.



NEW MEMBERS

Jerry Adair
728 Eastgate
Charleston, IL 61920
217 345 3216

Mrs Bess Bergmann
1010 Cathedral Way
Pomona, CA 91768 2330
909 622 9892

Geoffrey Berry
5 Senate Place
Larchmont, NY 10538
914 834 7921

Charles Black
3135 N Concourse Drive
Mt Pleasant, MI 48858 8107
517 773 1263

Robin Bove
102 Vista Drive
La Vista Beach, CA 95076
831 688 0957

Ronald Chrisley
1610 Stonewall Drive
Newark, OH 43055 1725
740 366 1166

Woodrow L. Coleman
150 S.E. Four Winds Drive
Stuart, FL 34996
561 283 8387

Robert Cords
1020 James
Derby, KS 67037
316 788 5354

Paul Cubstead
2018 Annvil
Houston, TX 77090
281 583 9605

R. W. Grant
3765 S.E. Truman Avenue
Topeka, KS 66609 1423
785 266 3027

John Green
2 Southern Pine Trail
Ormond Beach, FL 32174
904 677 2904

Bill Henderson
206 Channing Trail
Warner Robins, GA 31088 4066
912 922 0626

Ronald Johnson
3424 Boxdale
Memphis, TN 38118
901 366 4789

John Lytle
2906 Daniell Circle
Bellevue, NE 68123
402 292 5776

Carlos Lucero
505 N. 4th
Bloomfield, NM 87413 5413
505 632 3744

Mark Natola
23 Oak Ridge Road
W. Lebanon, NH 03784
603 643 3399

Keith Ryland
P.O. Box 233
Cuba, AL 36907
205 392 4165

Tom Vinson
P.O. Box 587
Tahoma, CA 96142 0587
530 525 6254

* * * * *

ADD TO ROSTER

Elinor Schussler
667 Golf Course Drive
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

* * * * *

**55thSRW ASSOCIATION
MEMBERS'
ADDRESS CHANGES**

Richard Barnard
17960 SW Johnson St., Apt. D
Beaverton, OR 97006 4464

George Blume
905 N. Cedar St.
Wichita, KS 67235 1951

Mrs Robin Bove
102 Vista Drive
La Selva Beach, CA 95076 1753

Mrs Betty Calvin
1921 Old Post Terrace
Woodbridge, VA 22191 3823

Bruce Carson
2841 Blount Drive
Bumpass, VA 23024 9691

Charles B. Cowden
1375 Dolphin Drive
Aptos, CA 95003 5703

Richard Davis
656 S. Circle Avenue
Barrington, IL 60010
847 639 9464

Mrs. Mae Davis
111 Thompson St.
Raritan, NJ 088869

Don Deyarmin
2807 Elm St
Altoona, PA16601 3714

John E. Drost
14221 Hillside Drive
Jamul, CA 91935 3239

Denver P. Elliott
3159 Knollwood Drive #2
Mobile, AL 36693 2709
352 854 7711

Donald D. Gurney
PO Box 20519
Carson City, NV 89721 0519

Mrs Rita Hanson
10500 Palm Drive
Largo, FL 33773

Mrs Jeannie Holton
6405 Heidelberg Court
Fort Worth, TX 76180 8414

Errol Hoberman
6441 Avenida Del Galvez
Navarre, FL 32566-8911

Donald G. Kinsey
797 Reeder Hill Road
Pontotoc, MS 38863 9254
601 489 4693

Loren Larson
PO Box 258
Alden, IA 50006

Mrs Pearl M. Mattison
8863D SW 92 Lane
Ocala, FL 34481
352 854 0854

Robert A. Miller
16366 Shady Oaks Lane
Ramona, CA 92065 6949
760 787 0347

James R. Nelson
2375 Mossy Bank Drive, Apt. 2
Sacramento, CA 95833 2372s

Mrs Dorothy Newcomb
119 Crestview Circle
Paris, TN 38242 3718

Ronald E. Nickerson
P.O. Box 2328
Canyon Lake, TX 78130
830 899 4775

Alan M. Prince
2240 Yosemite Parkway #19
Merced, CA 95340 4342
209 723 4952

Mrs Victor T. (Patricia) Prislusky
538 Wickham Way
Gahanna, ON 43230 2233

Wayne L. Stafford
567 W. 5200N
Park City, Utah 84098
435 649 7999

Ken Urtz
629 NW 143 St.
Edmond, OK 73013

Donald L. Thomas
45240 Mar Vista Drive
Mendocino, CA 95460

Harry F. Welch
2749 Scarborough Drive
Kissimmee, FL 34733

Richard Wilson
235 Nandia Terrace
Winter Springs, FL 32708 6401

Brian D. Worth
29404 Rainwood Road
Valley, NE 68064 6802

Nicholas Yanuzzi
2471 Thunderbird Drive
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362 3239
805 494 8826

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CHANGED AREA, ZIP OR PHONE NUMBERS

Mrs Doris Amis
541 479 4158

Mrs Kathryn Driscoll: 956

James Flowers
785 363 7417

Keith E. Foster
843 846 9466

Louis B. Gillmour
75022 2768
972 539 3179

Ron Grundon: 816

Frank Hicks: 253

Leo J. Harrity
916 961 2227

H. C. Knief: 828

Joe D. Ladd: 757

Don E. Miller
281 493 6434

Henry C. Monjar: 660

Raymond E. Morris: 785

Phillip W. Osborn: 530

Donald R. Ryan: 303

Mrs Jacki Schwadron
Area: 334; Zip: 36305

Robert G. Sims
619 486 3634

Mrs. Darlene Winters: 530

Benjamin L. White: 252

RETURNED, NO FORWARDING ADDRESS

Dock Atkins
Mrs. Janette Eilenburg
Robert J. H. Holbury
Mrs Hugh S. Owens
Robert Perry
William R. Smith
Mrs. Betty Wesson

If you know the current addresses of any of the above, please provide them to Treasurer and Membership Chairman:

Errol S. Hoberman
6441 Avenida Del Galvez
Navarre, FL 32566-8911
Phone: 890 939 5231
(Note: this is a new address)
Or e-mail:
RavenOne@fwbnet.com



MEMBERSHIP REPORT

As of 31 December 1998, the Association had 908 members in good standing. 173 are exempt from paying dues. Total, 1181 members, an increase of 158 from 1 August 1998.

The year your dues expire can be found in the upper right hand corner of the mailing label for this newsletter. If your dues expired in 1998, \$10.00 is due. Please remit to 55SRW Association at address above at your earliest convenience.



YOUR 55th WEB SITE ADDRESS:

www.55srwa.org

All the news about the 55th SRWA that's fit to print and a whole lot that isn't. Seek and ye shall be rewarded by the intrepid **Don Griffin**, Webmeister extrodinaire.



FINANCIAL REPORT

The Association bank balance is \$9,134.00 of which \$5,000.00 is in a certificate of deposit.

Submitted by Errol Hoberman, Treasurer



PINS AVAILABLE

For those of you who would like to have an Association pin to replace a lost one, or have an extra, whatever. They are available for \$5.00 a piece.

Also available from the Association are B-47 1000 hour and 3500 hour pins. Those are \$25 each post paid.

Send orders for number of which ever pin or pins you would like with a check in the total and correct amount to Errol Hoberman at his new address shown elsewhere on this page.



55th WING BIRTHDAY BALL HELD 23 JANUARY 1999

The 55th Wing at Offutt AFB, NE, held its 21st annual Birthday Ball on 23 January 1999 at Harvey's Casino/Hotel in Council Bluffs, IA. The event celebrated the 58th anniversary of the activation of the 55th Pursuit Group, forerunner of the present day Wing, on 15 January 1941.

This year's theme was "Vigilant, Valiant, Victorious". It was highlighted with the honoring of nineteen former members of the organization who helped make the Wing's history and represented eras from World War II, through the Cold War and the Gulf War.

Individual portraits of the honorees were commissioned and made into a composite lithograph detailing their contributions to that storied history. Each individual was recognized as a "Hero" of the Wing during the main Ball program of sight and sound. It was a stirring occasion.

Those people who were so honored are: and **Lt Colonel (Ret) Jack Jenkins (deceased), Major General (Ret) Ed Giller, Major (Ret) Walt Konantz, Major General (Ret) Howard "HP" Smith, Lt Colonel (Ret) Robert Rich, former Capt Hank Dubuy, and Colonel (Ret) Burt Barrett.**

Also honored were: **Retired Colonels John McKone and Bruce Olmstead, Colonel Charles "Iron Mike" Rafferty (deceased), Lt Colonel (Ret) Harry Tull, Colonel (Ret) Donald White, General (Ret) George Miller.**

Others were: **Lt General John R. Sams, Jr., former Capt Sheila O'Lear (now Kirkwood),**

Brig General (Ret) Larry Mitchell, Major Edward "Muddy" Waters, Staff Sergeant Ronald King (deceased), and Brig General (Ret) Reggie Urschuler.

Nearly 800 retired and active duty personnel, community leaders, spouses and friends attended the Ball. **About 80 of those were Association members, plus many of their spouses, family members, and guests.**

The 55SRW Association was recognized as one of the official sponsors of the Ball, and acknowledged for purchasing the commemorative wine glasses for each attendee.

Most comments from those who have attended many of the Balls since the inception, commented that this one was among the very best, if not **the** best, ever held.

This gala event is done in the best military traditions, is a grand spectacle, and well worth the effort to come to Omaha in January to attend. Just ask those who do come when you get the chance.

It becomes a sort of mini-reunion with the added asset of interacting with the Wing active duty personnel of all ranks and specialties.



PROTOCOL NOTICE

For those of you who are dismayed or otherwise miffed when you receive an invitation from the 55th Wing for major events, such as the annual Birthday Ball, lighten up and read on. Here's the 'why' of it.

The 55th SRW Association

roster is sent to, and periodically updated for, the 55th Wing Protocol Office as part of the database they use when sending invitations. By design that roster has been **devoid** of individuals' ranks for many years. The personnel at the Protocol Office are required to put a title on formal addresses, thus most of the Association members are labeled "Mister".

Similarly, if the roster does **not** indicate a spouse name, "and Guest" is included on the invitation address.

There is a high incidence of turnover in that office. They are usually junior officers, many new to the Wing, who do not readily know those on the 'geezer' list. Although several Association members in the local area have assisted in correcting the list, it is a daunting task, at best.

Due to the limited number of personnel and resources, the Protocol Office does not have the time to research a constantly growing and changing membership list of nearly 1000 names to find ranks of people, whether they are retired or not, and marital status.

It would be most helpful to assist Protocol in updating its database if, when you respond to an invitation, either accepting or regretting, you include the information you desire to have on future addressing.

It would also help them cull the list if you would indicate whether or not you even want to keep receiving such invitations.

The articles on this page contributed by Max Moore.