

A Chronicle Of Longevity

by Max Moore

Many 55thers have stories about their service in the 55th. We have all heard: "I was at Forbes for five years and moved with the Wing to Offutt." "This is my third tour with the Wing." "I served nine years at Offutt in the Wing."

And most everyone knows that Reg Urschler entered the Wing a second looie and left as a one star (over a span of 25 years and three separate tours). Others, such as Tom Moncure and Fred Schapker, spent 20 or more years in the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* interrupted only by an unaccompanied tour to Shemya, Korea or some other armpit.



When I relate my Air Force career to someone, the short version usually goes like this: nearly 28 years active duty, 25 in SAC and more than 23 years assigned to the 55th. The latter part often is greeted with some astonishment that anyone could be in one unit for so much of a career. It may or may not be a record for service in the 55th, but I've had many a comment that my tenure was likely unmatched. So, I have done the research to put forth to any challenges.

While at Mather AFB, CA (and where I met my lovely child bride, Carol) for Advanced Bomb/Nav Training, on 3 November 1959, I received orders assigning me to the 338th SRS of the 55SRW at Forbes AFB, KS, near Topeka, effective 19 January 1960 with a reporting date of 12 July 1960. What is significant here is that I was on the books of the 338th from that time and, after various TDYs, delays enroute and leaves, I eventually arrived at Forbes on 27 June 1960.

After over two years of ATC and SAC training crapola, I was finally going operational!

Upon reporting into the old two-story, wooden WWII building housing the 338th, the commander was on leave, the ops officer was flying, so I was directed to the squadron navigator, one Major John Wilson, a wiry, grizzled Texan, as I recall. Spiffy in my pressed, board-stiff 505s, shoes gleaming, blond flattop trimmed, I was the epitome of AFR 35-10. A diminutive Steve Canyon-type in every way. Saluting smartly in front of Major Wilson's desk, I stated, "Lt Max R. Moore, navigator, reporting for duty, sir." Major Wilson looked up from his paperwork and gave me a steely stare. I received no return salute, no handshake, no "Welcome to the squadron; glad to see you," - whatever. His first words to me were: "Where the (expletive) have you been?" Somewhat deflated and taken aback, I detailed my last six months as quickly as I could, relating that I had been to Combat Crew Training schools, survival training at Stead AFB, took leave to be married and had just arrived from a honeymoon trip.

Major Wilson's response was, "Who told you you could get married?"

By now the tittering and stifled laughs outside the cubicle were very evident and I knew this tough ol' bird was having sport at my expense. Since I held up without sweating or soiling myself, the rest of the interview and day went smoother and more businesslike. I still remember Lt Johnny Johnson rescuing me as the 'old head'



showing me around. I soon found out he had arrived just two weeks before. Four days later, 1 July 1960, Major Will Palm's RB-47H crew was shot out of the sky by a Soviet MiG over the Barents Sea, and I wondered, "What the (expletive) kind of outfit am I in?" (The story of how I selected my assignment out of Mather, and how green I was at the time, is a tale unto itself.)

Moving right along, I went to the 343rd SRS on 17 Dec 60 and had my first memorable encounter with then-Capt Sam Pizzo, the squadron navigator, who was not yet a legend, not yet infamous. (Space does not allow for that anecdote, either, but it was not to be my only memorable one about Sam.)

Six-plus years later, two children born at the Forbes hospital, and after being crewed with aircraft commanders Bud Bonham, Don Thomas, Reg Urschler, Jimmy P. Haynes and Bill Klausner, et al, I departed the 55th and Forbes with the family on 10 February 1967 in route to become an RC-135 navigator at Yokota AB, Japan.

An interesting sidelight here: at Forbes, my last aircraft commander, Vic Prislusky, copilot Dave Frutchey and I were crewed in early 1966 in the RB-47. We were assigned as a crew to Castle AFB, CA for -135 training, then PCS to Yokota and a subsequent unit-PCS to Kadena AB on Okinawa. We served together for nearly three years in two different aircraft systems at three separate bases (and I'm not even counting the TDYs). Ours was also the first SAC crew ever to PCS to Kadena. It was also our distinction to fly the first

completed Combat Apple mission in the Gulf of Tonkin (Benny Allen's crew (S-01) had to abort into U Tapao, Thailand, on the initial sortie), and we eventually flew the 1000th Combat Apple mission, as well.

Reassigned back to the 55SRW, now located at Offutt AFB, NE, as of 10 September 1969, once again in the 343rd.

LtCol "Jumpin' Joe" Gyulavics was the squadron commander, and LtCol Don Jolly the ops officer. I went on the veteran aviator Jimmy Jones' crew ("I just want to be an LC AC on an RC"), then "Smilin' Bob" Arnold's, and here's a kicker - Vic Prislusky, who had gone to Vietnam after the Kadena tour, came to Offutt and wound up in the 55th Stand/Eval Division, saw to it that I was once more assigned to his crew.

Eventually, I went on to wing staff jobs with Command Airlift Support (CSA-affectionately known as



Prislusky, Al Smith, Moore, Krosnoff, Harris, Scott, Wilder
Kadena AB, Okinawa - May 1969

'Chicken Stuff Airlines'. Motto: "Unarmed, Unafraid, Unaware, and Couldn't Care Less"); Chief of Mission Development (scheduling); and ended my career serving four wing commanders as the Wing Executive Officer. I retired 1 October 1985, ending my last 16 years on active duty at Offutt.

It is also my privilege and good fortune to have a continued relationship with the 55th Wing even in my retirement years.

To recap the point of this narrative, and there is one: my tenure of assigned time in the 55th SRW began 19 Jan 60 and ran through 10 Feb 67; resumed 10 Sep 69 and continued through 1 Oct 85. By my count, that equals 23 years, one month and 24 days, give or take a few hours. It was a great life and, for a navigator especially, there was always job satisfaction in doing a real mission in the greatest outfit in the U.S. Air Force, then and now.

There it is. Are there any challengers out there?

Videmus Omnia, Forever! Contributed by Max Moore