

# *Videmus Omnia*

## 55<sup>th</sup> STRAT RECON WING ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1998

### **A ROCKIN' REUNION IN THE ROCKIE MAY 20-23**

The splendor and the scenic beauty of springtime in the Rockies, from the prairies of the eastern plains to the top of 14,000 ft Pike's Peak, as well as a great time of camaraderie, activities, the telling of war stories (and probably discussions of various ailments and bodily functions), await members of the 55<sup>th</sup> SRW Association who will reunite May 20-23 1998 in Colorado Springs, CO.

The Sheraton Hotel will be the headquarters for the festivities planned by Reunion Committee Chairman Keith Smith, members Phil Carr, Rick Smith, Chuck Holte, Tom Reed and a host of volunteers. Room reservations (\$83 per night plus tax) should be made directly with the Colorado Springs Sheraton Hotel at 1-800-981-4012 no later than April 20 to assure you get the guaranteed Reunion rate. Travel arrangements at bargain rates may be made by contacting Bob Denny at *A Better Way to Travel*, 1-800-347-9002.

For those of you driving to the Springs via car, RV, motorcycle, covered wagon, et al, the Sheraton is located at 2886 South Circle Drive, just east of I-25 exit #138 on the southern part of the city. The hotel provides courtesy shuttle service to and from the airport and rental cars are available.

If you have not yet made those reservations and travel plans, time it is a passin'. Get it done!

Send in your Reunion registration form (see attachment to this newsletter) and check by April 20<sup>th</sup> so the committee can get its "head counts" for the various events.

"Fifty-Fifthers" arriving on Wednesday, May 20, will be able to register and enjoy gathering in the Hospitality suite, both of which will be open noon to midnight. Registration and the Hospitality suite will be open at convenient hours throughout the Reunion.

While there are a variety of scheduled events, there will be plenty of time for sight-seeing and dining on your own, or for meeting with friends, comrades and former crewdogs to reminisce and/or catch up on each other's doings.

On Thursday, a trip to the historic mining and gambling town of Cripple Creek will be available in the afternoon, returning that evening. There will be a nominal fee for bus transport (what you spend at Cripple Creek will be your own affair). Sign-up will be

that day, but please indicate your interest on the registration form so the committee will have, in this case, a "seat count".

Friday features the obligatory morning golf outing for duffers, hackers and pro-wannabes (wait 'til you tee up at 7000 ft and let 'er rip) at the USAF Academy course; a bus tour of the USAF Academy and Garden of the Gods, and Old Colorado City from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; and the dinner show at the Flying W Ranch that evening.

Saturday begins with a slate of historical briefings at 9:00 a.m. (no charge). Svend Christensen of the Danish Institute of International Affairs will discuss the highlights of USAF operations in Greenland, including the story of the northernmost jet landing ever made: an RB-47 at Nord, Greenland 510 miles from the North Pole in January 1957. Also invited are representatives from the USAF Museum to discuss the RB-47 and Cold War display, and from the Pentagon's POW-MIA Office for an update on Korea/Cold Wars' research.

Additionally, Cargill Hall, the Chief Historian of the National Reconnaissance Office, and TSgt. Craig Kibbe, the 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Historian, will attend to interview and gather oral history from 55<sup>th</sup> veterans who had compelling experiences in the early years of Cold War recon. (*Bring your war stories. Like we need to tell ya.*)

Following the historical session, there will be a general membership meeting to elect the Association Board of Directors, decide on the where and when of the next reunion (Fall 1999?), review Association business since the last reunion, and discuss other business members deem appropriate.

The Hospitality suite will close at 5:00.p.m. The gala banquet will begin with a cocktail hour (pay as you go) at 6:00 p.m., with dining and dancing until midnight, which will be the cap to what we all anticipate will be another memorable reunion

Breakfast or brunch on your own Sunday as farewells are said and plans made to keep in touch and for meeting again.

Be there or be sorry you weren't!

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## **LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Greetings from the Midlands,

Since our last newsletter, your Board of Directors has acted on several proposals that I want you all to be apprised of. First, Don Griffin convinced us that we needed to expand our web site because it was just about full (For those of you who do not yet have access, Don Griffin and Dave Johnson have done a fantastic job setting it up and keeping navigation easy for us neophytes). The expansion was more costly, but needed to be done. To cover the cost, we decided to pursue sponsorship by the SAC Credit Union. After much debate, it was decided that the organization should remain pure and carry its own financial responsibilities.

To foster the good relationship that we have nurtured with the Wing, the Board decided to approve gratis membership to ten key positions in the 55th Wing (Commander, Vice Commander, Operations Group Commander and Deputy, Logistics Group Commander and Deputy, and Commanders of the 38th, 343rd, 45th Recon Sqds and the 97th Intel Sqd). However, once the incumbents leave those positions, they will be responsible for keeping their dues paid to remain members in good standing.

A proposal to rename our newsletter "*VIDEMUS OMNIA*" was unanimously approved and appears in the title for the first time in this edition. With the Birthday Ball fast approaching, it was decided to contribute \$1000 to make it possible for younger enlisted personnel to attend.

A previously appointed active duty Board member, Lt Col Bob Krist, received orders to become the Advisor to the Nebraska Air National Guard. To keep this important position filled, we looked to Lt Col Bo Marlin, Commander of the 45RS, and the Wing Commander appointed him to the Board in early December.

Robb Hoover and Max Moore have been putting the final touches on our briefing about the Association to be presented to the active duty troops in appropriate forums.

The twentieth 55th Birthday Ball is now in the books and it was truly a grand affair. A sellout crowd of nearly 720 active duty, retirees and community partners and spouses/guests crowded the Harvey's Hotel-Casino ballroom in formal mess dress and all their finery. A more detailed article appears in this newsletter, but I just want to say that it was the best Birthday Ball I've attended, and I've been to most of them. The formal portion of the evening was concluded by BrigGeneral Gary Ambrose recognizing the Birthday Ball Committee, and he applauded Reg Urschler for starting the tradition of the Birthday Ball 20 years ago while serving as Wing Commander. He also gave a ringing endorsement of the 55th SRW Association and encouraged his folks to join and attend the reunion in May. It was a terrific evening.

We're girding for the next big event, the '98 rendezvous in Colorado Springs. Our Reunion committee has done a great job planning the event to ensure everyone has a good time. Talk it up with your friends and make your reservations today. I will have the video tapes of the 1996 Reunion completed soon and if you want a copy of the tape, let me know by e-mail ([BillErnst@aol.com](mailto:BillErnst@aol.com)) or regular mail. The price will be @ \$15.00. See you in Colorado Springs.

*VIDEMUS OMNIA*  
*Bill Ernst, President*

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## CARDS AND LETTERS

The newsletter (Nov 1997) was a welcome, interesting, informative and refreshing publication.

Thanks for the Wing pin. I think it is great.

Jean, my wife, passed away Sunday, November 11, 1997. She was devoted to me through all my years with the 55<sup>th</sup> RONS, TDYs, etc., and I believe she deserves the honor of wearing my pin to her final resting place. I will be pinning her at the funeral.

If there is a possibility of my having another for my own wear, please advise. I know they don't come cheap.

Respectfully and fraternally,  
*Jim Stitt Kokomo, IN*

Editor's Note: Pin has been sent.

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Am looking for any photos of the following aircraft: RB-47E, RB-47K, RB-47H, ERB-47H and especially the "Tell Two" EB-47E, numbers 53-2315, 316 and 320.

I served as crew chief on the following: RB-47E 52-789 in North Africa in 1955. The AC was Maj. McGibney and CP was A. York; RB-47H 53-4298; RB-47H 53-4286 in Thule in 1956. AC was LtCol Grant; RB-47H 53-6247 in Alaska.. AC was LtCol G. Stapp; EB-47E 53-7320 in Turkey in 1958-59. AC was LtCol J. Riley.

Photo not available

I started out on the first B-47 assigned to a bomb wing in the 369<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sqd and ended my career 16 years later on ERB-47H 53-6249.

All photos or slides sent to me will be photo copied and returned ASAP.

Enclosed are photos of RB-47H 53-4296. Would appreciate any info on the bomber nose modification on this A/C. Also would like to hear from crew members who flew A/C 291 with the trailing wire antennas.

*James Rodecap*  
*144 Osborne Dr, Pomona, KS 66076-8913*

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## **THE 55<sup>th</sup> WING BIRTHDAY BALL**

The 55<sup>th</sup> Wing held its 20<sup>th</sup> annual Birthday Ball on 31 January 1998 at Harvey's Casino-Hotel in Council Bluffs, IA. The event celebrated the 57<sup>th</sup> year of the wing's heritage, which had its origin as the 55<sup>th</sup> Pursuit (later Fighter) Group of World War II. The tradition was conceived by then-Colonel Regis F.A. Urschler when he was the wing commander in 1977-78.

The Ball was attended by 720 active duty personnel, retired former members of the Wing, local dignitaries and guests, thus making it the largest Ball ever, and the second most attended event at Harvey's since its opening just two years ago.

**Among those attending were nearly 80 55SRW Association members and spouses/guests, including Association Board members: President Bill Ernst, Vice President Robb Hoover, Max Moore, Lt Col Bo Marlin, and TSgt Craig Kibbe. Five past wing commanders were there, as well: BGen (Ret) Urschler, BGen (Ret) Larry Mitchell, retired Colonels Steve Stevens, Dan Peterson, and Bill Manire.**

**The theme of the Ball was "Heritage of Excellence..." which began with the posting of the Colors and National Anthem, followed by the solemn POW/MIA remembrance ceremony, which caused a somber response from the audience. A special tribute to the Wing's distinguished history was presented via video and music.**

**The event was keynoted by retired Marine Lt. Patrick "Clebe" McClary's inspiring and riveting speech. A Vietnam hero and renowned motivational speaker, Clebe's platoon was overrun deep in enemy territory. He sustained injuries from two enemy grenades and was literally blown from his foxhole by a satchel charge strapped to a VC soldier who fell dead next to him. Clebe suffered the loss of his left arm, left eye, nose, left ear, most of his right hand and one leg. Yet, he managed to get his men out on a helicopter. He was told he would never walk again, yet he has run marathons and set treadmill records. He has given new meaning to the words courage, commitment and tenacity.**

**Some individuals were recognized as representatives of the various eras in Wing history: WWII by four 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group veterans; Korea, Harry Tull; Cold War, Dick Hedge and Max Moore; Vietnam, Hank Barrows.**

**In his opening remarks BrigGen Gary Ambrose, Commander 55<sup>th</sup> Wing extolled the Wing's many and varied accomplishments in the past year, and twice mentioned the 55SRW Association and its membership, and the attending members were recognized enmasse.**

**General Ambrose also ended his concluding comments with effusive praise and a glowing appreciation of the Association for past contributions, and for the continuing involvement of its members with the Wing. He gave an emphatic endorsement for joining the "alumni association", saying he was a member who proudly wears the new Association pin. His comments were sincere and indicative of the excellent rapport currently enjoyed between the Association and the Wing.**

*(Sam Pizzo's dream lives!)*

**The Birthday Ball is a gala event done in the best military traditions and ceremony. The Association's Board strongly encourages as many members as possible, especially those in the local area of Offutt, to attend this annual festivity in the future.**

**Late January in Omaha may not be the best weather, but the Ball and its associated activities turn into a mini-reunion, and really all worth the trip.**

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**THE 55<sup>th</sup> WING HITS GULF MILESTONE**

The 55<sup>th</sup> Wing at Offutt AFB, NE, recently completed its 200<sup>th</sup> mission in the Persian Gulf area under Operation Southern Watch. The Wing has had a presence in the area since 1990 before Iraq invaded Kuwait.

Operation Southern Watch began in 1992 and crews of RC-135 aircraft have been flying electronic reconnaissance sorties in support of the ban on Iraqi military aircraft flying in specific areas of the region.

Aircrews usually pull 30-90 day TDYs to the area in addition to performing the diverse missions of the Wing in other parts of the globe. Maintenance, support personnel and flight crews shuttle between the area and Offutt for their rotations. In spite of less than ideal working and living conditions (a desert tent city), they have done, and are doing an outstanding job.

*Material from the Offutt AFB Air Pulse and the Omaha World-Herald.*

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## **RC-135 NAVIGATION EQUIPMENT UPDATE**

The RC-135 navigator has seen the equipment used for positioning the aircraft evolve both in capability and reliability in the last 30-plus years. From the ASN-53 navigation system to the LN-16 and to the LN-20, each system provided more information and eased the navigator workload.

The present navigation system, the GSIDS LN-20 (GPS, Stellar, Inertial, Doppler), is a mature, extremely accurate and user friendly system. The old LN-20, with a volatile core memory, was very sensitive to aircraft power and had the bad habit of locking up and/or dying. Usually this occurred at the most inopportune time, such as in a turn. Those problems were addressed and fixed. All the changes came about as a result of increased accuracy and reliability requirements from the sensors and operator inputs into how the system should perform.

The old analog computer was gutted and the works replaced with solid state hardware with Flash memory and EEPROMs to store the program. The cooling requirements were decreased and the liquid chiller was deleted. Cabin air is blown through the computer heat exchanger for cooling.

The Stellar Inertial Reference Unit (SIRU) has undergone major changes. The star tracker was replaced with a solid state TV camera which operates in the near infrared band and acquires stars through haze and thin clouds that the old sensor could not penetrate. New "O" ring connectors have helped cure "leaky" SIRUs and reduced window contamination due to venting of moisture and gases. Reliability time is now in excess of 600 hours. The improvement in accuracy of heading information, plus the dependability and maintainability attest to the system's upgrade.

SIRUs have been modified with laser gyros (ZLGs) for test and evaluation, and have proven just as accurate as the old "iron wheels" while giving the possibility of no maintenance for a lifetime. ZLGs require no heaters for a stable platform, and with reduced temperatures, there is little or no venting to dirty the window. In addition, reducing the temperature in the SIRU with the ZLGs will significantly improve the

performance of the star sensor, which has increased sensitivity (lower noise) with lower temperatures.

The area most noticeably changed is the man/machine interface. The old Control Display Unit with its light bulbs and thumbwheels, has been replaced with a Control & Monitor Unit (CMU). This amazing box replaced the G-948 and GPS control head. Functions only dreamed about by many veteran navigators are now done routinely. Up to 200 waypoints may be loaded by manual entry, or by using a 3 ½" floppy diskette which can be programmed during mission planning. These waypoints can be flown in any order, and 10 steering tables with up to 50 action selections are possible.

Every function of the system can be controlled or monitored from the CMU. GPS status and position, Doppler ground speed and drift, and stellar tracking are all available with a twist of the page switch. Desired track, heading, time-to-go, estimated time of arrival, and Zulu time are all available on one concise page.

Steering options have been expanded to include bank angle and direction of turn (yes, it can turn the long way around), both track and heading hold, and for orbit holding when the mission requires.

One area that has caused the most excitement is the interface with both the radar and pilot's Control and Display Indicator (CDI). LN-20 information is displayed on the radar picture to include waypoints and planned track lines. The pilots can even select a data page to monitor the steering waypoints and ETAs. The pilot's CDI can reflect steering deviation commands and LN-20 desired headings.

With all these improvements and enhanced reliability of the system, the 55<sup>th</sup> Wing has elected to assign one navigator per crew for most missions. Future cockpit changes will be geared for better crew situation awareness and decreased workload making the RC-135 both easier to fly and a more capable weapon system.

*Submitted by Tom "Loose" Lane of Raytheon/E-Systems.  
Edited by Max Moore*

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## **THE 55<sup>th</sup> GETTING TO KNOW THE RB-47H**

When I checked into my new assignment to the 343rd SRS, 55th SRW at Forbes AFB, KS, in the fall of 1955, I was excited and enthusiastic about crewing on a new, all-jet aircraft. I was a 33-year old first lieutenant, married, who had just spent three years as a crew on RB-36s based at Ellsworth AFB. Approximately half of that time was as a raven one.

A number of crews from Rapid City had preceded me to Forbes. Ted Mitchell, a good friend then and now, was one. Ted and his family were living in a rental development called Likens-Foster (known to some as "Leaky Faucets)". Immediately upon our arrival, Ted showed my wife and I around, and within 24 hours we had bought a new house on Burlingame Road just a few miles west of the base.

After several weeks of paper shuffling and equipment orientation, I was assigned to a crew. During the equipment orientation I discovered that the ECM equipment I would be using was not very different from that in the RB-36.

Eugenius Zeisjof Dziejowski was my AC, a diminutive 5-foot, jovial captain from Atlanta. With this apparently unpronounceable name, he explained that he was known simply as "Gene Jowski". Our co-pilot changed by the hour. Steve Truhan and Guido Tesi are two that I recall.

Bachelor Huey Waple, a first lieutenant from Fairfax, VA, was our navigator. I was the raven one and Chuck Melahn from New York City, a bachelor second lieutenant, was raven two. Raven three was another shave tail, Bob Harward from Denver. Bob was married to a drop-dead gorgeous beauty who had recently been Miss Colorado.

Gene and I had seen combat service with the Army Air Forces during World War II. The other crewmembers had not. Gene, I think, had flown in the Berlin Air Lift. The ACs, navigators and co-pilots in the 343rd as well as the 38th and 338th all had several hundred hours in other than reconnaissance models of the B-47, much of it at bases such as Ben Guerir, Nouassur and Sidi Slimane in Libya. (That was before Muammar Khadafi came to power and selected the United States as his personal foe).

A primary objective of my first mission in the RB-47H was an orientation for me and another raven one, my buddy Ted Mitchell.

The ECM instructor for our initial flight was Captain John McCaffrey. To say that John McCaffrey was a colorful character is like saying that Curtis Lemay was a pilot. He had the black hair, brows and mustache of a riverboat gambler. His visored cap didn't have a 50-mission crush, it had a 500-mission crush. The sharp edge of his New York accent enhanced the swashbuckler image. Having been flying with the 55th since the RB-29 days, John had spent so many deployments at Yokota that his conversation was heavily laced with Japanese phrases: "*dozo*," please; "*sukoshi*," little bit; "*takusan*," whole lot," and many, many others.

On non-flying days, at noon John and his buddies could be found in the officers' club bar in a noisy game of hearts, the Japanese phrases bouncing off the wall.

At the aircraft John introduced us to the RB-47H. He showed us the hinged hatch on the plane's forward left side through which all crew members entered and exited. When opened, a telescoping ladder was revealed. You climbed this ladder to reach an aisle which accessed the navigator's position in the nose and the two pilot's positions some four feet above.

He pointed out a steel spoiler door on the forward side of the hatch opening. If the crew were to bail out, rather than eject, the AC would activate the spoiler door. Compressed air would thrust this spoiler door downward into the air stream so that air pressure would not prevent the crew from exiting the hatch. The pilots had upward ejection seats. The navigator and ravens had downward ejecting seats.

Three positions in the aisle, where the ravens would sit during takeoffs and landings, were equipped with slings of webbing. The ravens sat on the floor leaning back into



these slings. John pointed out that each raven would be plugged into the intercom but only the raven one would have a mike.

John explained that, shortly after takeoff, the AC would depressurize the plane and put it in level flight for a few minutes during which time the ravens would open a roll-type hatch above the telescoped ladder, take a giant step across the empty space above the hinged hatch, open a small door and enter a cramped tunnel leading aft to the ECM compartment. In the ECM compartment (which in a bomber version of the aircraft was the bomb bay) the ravens would close the compartment door, buckle into their seats and notify the AC that they were in position. Forward and ECM compartments had separate pressurization systems. The raven one controlled ECM compartment pressurizing.

In our hard hats, oxygen masks, bulky flight suits, jackets and parachutes with bailout bottles (cylinders of compressed oxygen needed during high altitude bailout), we were a tight fit as we positioned ourselves for this muggy, summer night takeoff (SAC never began a training mission during business hours.)

As I settled into my sling, sitting on the floor in the aisle, with Ted in front of me and John behind, centered in the cacophonous vortex of six screaming jet engines, deafening even inside the plane and with earphones in my hard plastic helmet padded with sponge rubber, it is not an exaggeration to say that my sensory equipment was experiencing overload. I had some apprehensions about the complete safety of my person. I had certain anxieties. You could truthfully say I was afraid of this airplane. Subsequent events illustrated that I was not alone in my trepidation.

Takeoff was uneventful. At an altitude of a few hundred feet, the aircraft leveled off and the AC told us over the intercom to proceed to the ECM compartment. John opened the hatch and crawled through the door into the tunnel leading aft. I followed taking great care to secure a tight grip on handholds while crossing the ladder well. I feared that if I should fall upon the hatch, it might open and drop me out into the black Kansas night.

Halfway through the tunnel, I felt my chute snag onto something and suddenly I was surrounded by billows of white silk (maybe nylon). During my training I had fully accepted the maxim that a parachute should not be deployed inside an aircraft. Yet I had inadvertently done so. My chute had opened. Ted, following me, was shrouded in my parachute. I struggled to gather armloads of parachute cloth and stuff it ahead of me into the ECM compartment. Inside the compartment, I got out of my parachute harness and managed to wind shroud lines about the material and to form it into a sloppy bundle that I stowed out of the way.

Ted closed and latched the door and John explained to the AC how things were going with the three stooges in our end of the airplane.

The AC told John to pressurize, which he did. The moment he flipped the pressurization control white vapor poured from the air vents engulfing the cabin. The three of us instantly concluded that smoke was issuing from the vents. Because the ECM cabin was surrounded by fuel tanks, this idea was panic-loaded. When John reported this to the AC, Gene made the lightning decision to order us to depressurize and move forward. This we did without anything dramatic happening. Twenty

minutes after takeoff, the ECM portion of the mission had been scrapped. The mission continued, with us ravens in slings forward.

Over the intercom the pilots were discussing the poor performance of number four engine. After a few minutes number four was shut down. When this information was radioed to the 55th command post, the AC was ordered to abort the mission and return to base. Shortly thereafter, a counter-decision was issued: Proceed to Hunter AFB, SC. This apparently was based upon weather conditions at Forbes and the presumed availability of either repair or replacement of our defective engine, Hunter being a B-47 base.

I was totally unprepared for our descent (or penetration, in jet-speak) to Hunter. John McCaffrey had not told me, nor had anyone else, that in going from 35,000 feet to 5,000 feet a B-47 didn't fly to the lower altitude. It went into a virtual free fall, the wings and stabilizer providing no lift. As we hurtled quietly downward, I was aghast that any flying organization as professional as Curtis Lemay's SAC would even consider such a mindless maneuver. Had I been given the choice at that point of continuing my flying career or walking safely away from it, I would have given it serious consideration.

We landed at Hunter in Saturday's wee hours, no SAC rarity.

The Hunter officers' club was conveniently located just across the street from our BOQ. Ted and I, sharing a room, arose Sunday morning in time to get some breakfast there. On entering the club, an elderly man clad in suit and tie, dressed for church I thought, was busily arranging a beautiful display of, to me at least, exotic flowering plants. I commented that this was a splendid display to someone else who had paused to admire it. That person whispered that the old gentleman was Major General Somebody who had a command relationship with Hunter's past. I walked over to him and said, "They're beautiful. Did you raise them?" "I didn't steal them," he responded crustily. So much for southern gentility.

We learned that our engine could not be repaired at Hunter and that a replacement would take a few days to deliver. With only flight uniforms and no toilet kits, we were in a poor position to enjoy our unplanned sojourn. This was neither the first nor the last such experience for any of us.

We bought toothbrushes and razors, we read, we went to movies, we ate at the officers' club. We called home and talked to our families. After several days of this we began to go stir crazy. The three crows and the navigator decided to make a foray into Charleston. Sympathetic residents of the BOQ loaned us some clothes; we bought a few polo shirts and underwear items at the exchange, and minimally presentable as Air Force dudes, the four of us went to town.

Someone on base had recommended the food at an antebellum, architecturally impressive hotel in downtown Charleston. So we gave it a shot. The food, served by an ancient black waiter with a thunderous, deep bass voice, was superb.

After a martini or two, John McCaffrey hit his tale-telling stride and regaled us with one war story after another about TDY in the Land of the Rising Sun.

We were relaxing after our tasty meal, our boredom from the monotony of days in the BOQ having evaporated.

"I think I'll have a cigar," John declared. "And I believe I'll have some brandy," I responded as we placed these orders with our deep-voiced waiter.

Minutes later, he approached the table with cigar and brandy snifter on a silver salver. With a flourish, he handed John his cigar and asked imperiously, "Which one gets the COGNACK?"

We waited six days for a replacement engine and its installation. The ECM compartment pressurization system was checked out and deemed safe. The vapor was determined to have been moisture that had condensed under pressure. The ravens planned a mission for the homeward bound flight and all went well until we reached Kansas and began our penetration. Again I felt severe trepidation. But having survived one, the second wasn't too bad.

When we reached level off, all three ravens transited the tunnel, door and hatch without incident. We got into our landing positions and John closed the hatch. I felt proud as punch that I had mastered my job on the RB-47H. All of my earlier anxieties had been for naught

**KERBLAM!** A loud explosive sound. Then a foul odor engulfed me. Like the smell from inside an old automobile tube.

AC: "What the hell was that?"

Co-pilot: "Nothing seems wrong from here."

Raven one: "AC, did you activate the spoiler door?"

AC: "Nope."

A careful check of instruments and crew conditions revealed no unsafe indicators.

Approach and landing were normal. Not until we landed and left the aircraft did we discover what had happened. John noticed that the rubber tube leading from my bailout bottle was shredded. And my bailout bottle was empty.

What we deduced was that in my moving to landing position, the tube had somehow been pinched and that the green knob, which I would have pulled to provide oxygen to my mask in case of bailout at altitude, had been pulled. It apparently had hung up on one of a number of control cables running along inside the fuselage next to my takeoff and landing position. When I sat down, I pulled the knob, opening the valve in the bailout bottle. Oxygen under high pressure gushed into the rubber hose that was pinched. It ballooned until it went **KERBLAM**.

That was my introduction to the finest military aircraft on which I ever flew as a crew member. In time I even slept through the penetration.

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## CORRECTIONS

Your editors are not trying to build up the size of the TAPS column even though it may appear that way. (Lord knows it grows fast enough naturally.) In the November newsletter we were guilty of two incorrect death announcements for which we are truly regretful and do sincerely apologize. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the report of their demise was greatly exaggerated.

The following, the last we heard were, alive and kicking:

William R. Lowman  
Doris P. Amis, widow of Lawn Amis.

## \* \* TAPS \* \*

*Lawn Amis*  
*Louis Anticoli*  
*Anthony Barry, Jr.*  
*Donald A. Grant*  
*James Jenrette*  
*Jane Hubbard, wife of Robert S. (Bob) Hubbard*  
*Grace Kyle, wife of Wm. D. Kyle*  
*H. E. Mickey Schussler*  
*Jean Stitt, wife of James E. Stitt*  
*Earl V. Wilkinson*  
*Edgar Wayne Winkleman*

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## THE ASSOCIATION HOME PAGE

The 55<sup>th</sup> SRWA home page is a full-fledged entity. It has a new domain name and can be accessed at the new address:

<http://www.55srwa.org>

It is the excellent creation of Webmeister Don Griffin and enhanced by Dave Johnson. It has great graphics, pictures, color and a wealth of information on the Association, e-mail traffic, and an up to date e-mail roster, among other things. Hits on the web site now average about twenty a day.

Go there!

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## ASSOCIATION PINS

Any Association member who was a paid up member when the last newsletter came out in November 1997, has paid delinquent dues since then, has paid dues for 1998, or has joined as a new member, and who has not received the new Association pin, please let Errol Hoberman know via e-mail at [RavenOne@cybertron.com](mailto:RavenOne@cybertron.com)

Or write him at: 6690 Avenida Codorniz Navarre, FL 32566-8909

You can ascertain your status by looking at the address label for this newsletter - a number will be listed after your name, indicating the year your dues have been paid through. (Ex = exempt.)

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## THE 55<sup>th</sup> MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL DATA

### Membership:

As of 31 Jan 98 we have:

Members in good standing...515  
Non-current members.....456  
Persons on the Roster with  
no record of dues payment...470  
  
Total on Roster.....1441

Of these, there are 85 with no addresses (mail returned) who will not receive a newsletter. Members not in good standing (dues not paid up) will not receive the 1998 Address Roster.

### Finances:

#### Income:

Balance as of 15 Oct 97	\$9,580.28
Dues collected 16 Oct 97-31 Jan 98	3,892.39
Donation from E-Systems for Birthday Ball	1,750.00
Total:	\$15,288.51

#### Expenses:

Donation to 55 <sup>th</sup> for Birthday Ball	\$2,750.00
Dept of State Filing Fee	61.25
Newsletter & Postage (does not include return postage)	1,114.12
Miscellaneous Expenses	351.63
Total:	\$4,277.00
BALANCE:	\$11,011.51

\*\*\*\*\*

**THESE ARE ACTUAL PHRASES FROM  
OFFICER EFFICIENCY REPORTS**

"Not the sharpest knife in the drawer."  
"A room temperature IQ."  
"Fell out of the family tree."  
"If brains were taxed, he'd get a rebate."  
"A prime candidate for natural selection."  
"If you gave him a penny for his thoughts, you'd get change."  
"Got into the gene pool when the lifeguard wasn't watching."

\*\*\*\*\*

**REMINDER**

**55th SRW DUES ARE DUE ON THE FIRST OF JANUARY OF EACH YEAR AND COVER THAT CURRENT CALENDAR YEAR. NEW MEMBERS COMING ON BOARD PAYING DUES LATE IN 1997 WERE GIVEN CREDIT FOR PAYING 1998 DUES. ANNUAL DUES ARE \$10.00.**

\*\*\*\*\*

***"WE SEE ALL"***

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1947-1967***

***by Bruce M. Bailey, Lt Colonel, USAF (Ret)***

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