

# Videmus Omnia



55<sup>th</sup> STRAT RECON WING ASSOCIATION  
NEWSLETTER JUNE 1999

## COME SEE THE MILD, WILD WEST:RENO, BIGGEST LITTLE CITY IN THE WEST

The **Fifty-Fifth SRW Association** will hold its 20<sup>th</sup> reunion from 30 September to 2 October 1999 at Harrah's Reno. Located in the heart of



downtown, it is just ten minutes from the Reno International Airport. The hotel provides a wide variety of dining, entertainment and fitness facilities.

With your room you get free parking, a complimentary continental breakfast, as well as complimentary airport shuttle service between 5:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m..

**Room reservations (\$72.00 per night, plus tax, single or double occupancy) should be made directly to**

**Harrah's Reno at 1-800-367-9544 (be sure to mention the code S-55 for our reunion) no later than August 30, 1999. Handicap-accessible rooms are available and must be reserved in advance.**

Travel arrangements may be made through your favorite travel agency or by calling Delta Airlines at 1-800-241-6760 (mention the code **DMN 130257A for a Delta Airlines discount**). A taxi ride from the airport is about \$9.00.

RV'ers can park at the Reno RV Park, about four blocks from the hotel, call 1-800-445-3381, or at the Reno Hilton, 1-775 789 2147. Cab fare from the Hilton to Harrah's runs \$6 to \$8 per person. Buses run every half-hour.

Send your **Reunion Registration forms** (last page of this newsletter) and **payment by August 25, 1999** to provide

event head counts for the planning committee.

Those 55<sup>th</sup>ers arriving Wednesday, September 29, will be able to register until 8 p.m. and enjoy gathering in the hospitality suite. Registration and the suite will be open at convenient times throughout the reunion.

### THREE FUN-PACKED DAYS FOR YOUR PLEASURE

#### Thursday, September 30:

Sierra Sage golf outing with reserved tee times and golf cart. Price: \$56.00 per person  
Virginia City Historic Tour. Price: \$58.00 per person.

**OR, if you want to do BOTH** the Sierra Sage Golf Course **and** Virginia City Tour. The price is \$114.00 per person.

### Friday, October 1:

A luncheon and sightseeing cruise on Lake Tahoe's Emerald Bay aboard the *M.S. Dixie*, Tahoe's largest paddle wheeler. Price: \$31.00 per person. **Any and all payments must be made by August 25, 1999.**

Evenings are free for camaraderie or taking in Reno's many exciting attractions.

### Saturday, October 2:

**Recon Seminar**  
0900-0945: PREDATOR Unmanned Aerial Vehicle - Images from the Combat Zone. **LtCol Brian Bergdahl**, 11th Recon Squadron/DO, (former member of the 55th Wing) will provide Balkans/Iraq action video.

0945-1030: Space Espionage and National Security - The Early Days. **Professor Bill Burrows**, NYU, will brief on the dawn of space reconnaissance.  
1030-1115: Cold War Research-Looking at the Russian Archives A representative of the Defense POW/MIA Office will give an update on recent cooperative activities with the Russians in attempting to unveil archival holdings on Cold War shootdowns.

Following the seminar there will be the Association's general membership meeting to elect the Board of Directors, review business since the last reunion, decide on the dates and place for the next reunion, and to discuss any other appropriate business.

The Saturday evening banquet speaker will be **Major General Charles Metcalf, USAF (Ret.), Director USAF Museum**, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH. Gen Metcalf will present the plans for a Cold War addition to the USAF Museum. The centerpiece of this new exhibit will be a restored RB-47, tail #4299, a proud bird formerly with the 55<sup>th</sup> at Forbes AFB, KS.

The banquet will be held at Harrah's Automobile Museum. Pay-as-you-go cocktails at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 7:00 p.m. **Entree choices:** #1. Boneless breast of chicken stuffed with Boursin cheese and pine nuts with wild mushroom sauce for \$27.00; #2. Grilled fillet of salmon with clear Chardonnay sauce for \$34.00; #3. 8-ounce sliced roasted tenderloin with Cabernet Sauvignon sauce for \$38.00; and #4. 10-ounce grilled New York Sirloin with rosemary shallot Merlot sauce for \$38.00. **Please indicate your choice(s) of meals on the registration form.**

Price of dinner includes admission to the Automobile Museum. The museum offers a display of automobiles representing a range of foreign and domestic automotive history. On display are cars once owned by Al Jolson, John Wayne, Elvis Presley and other celebrities as well as the Thomas Flyer automobile, which won the race around the world in 1908.

Area temperatures will range from average daytime high

in low 70s and average nighttime temperature in the low 30s.

### Virginia City Tour and Cruise Details

Historic Virginia City-Mining turned this town into the most important settlement between Denver and San Francisco and the grubby miners into instant millionaires who built mansions, imported furniture and fashions from Europe and the Orient. At the peak of its glory over 100 years ago, Virginia City was a boisterous town peopled by Comstock characters. Mark Twain spent a stint as a reporter for the territorial Enterprise here. There was gold in every hill and Virginia City once concealed treasures of great wealth and held the attention of the world for half a century, pouring over \$400,000,000 in silver and gold into the economy of an expanding nation.

Strolling down the boardwalks takes you back to the boom days. Virginia City is focused on providing fun in attractions, shops, museums, old time western saloons and gaming on "C" Street which are still "the way it was". You'll see the Mackay Mansion, the Chollar Mansion, the Castle, Piper's Opera House and the old brick buildings that still retain their charm.

The Tahoe Emerald Bay tour will enable you to experience the natural beauty of Lake Tahoe, the vistas of the Sierras, Fannette Island and the unique Vikingsholm Castle

aboard an authentic stern wheel paddleboat. A lunch menu and complete bar service are available on this two-hour cruise.

### OTHER RENO AREA

#### ATTRACTIONS:

National Bowling Stadium  
Fleischmann Planetarium  
Tram ride to Heavenly Valley  
Donner Memorial  
Old Town Truckee

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### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we gear up for the Reno Reunion, I want to encourage everyone to come and renew old friendships, enjoy a quaint old cowboy town and visit the beautiful Lake Tahoe area. **Don Gurney** and his committee have done a great job of organizing the reunion, and have left plenty of time for you to enjoy the local area. It should be one of our best reunions and Don has described all of the activities that await us in the previous article.

The Omaha Caucus met at the Offutt Officer's Club on 7 May to discuss a number of items. Ten members from the Omaha area attended, including **Colonel Greg Smith**, the 55th Wing Vice Commander. The first order of business was to dedicate the 55th Heritage Lithograph that now hangs in the Raiders' Lounge (See photo on the Association web site).

We then moved on to appoint **Robb Hoover** Chairman of the Association's

Historical Committee. He will have on his committee **Bruce Bailey**, **Craig Kibbe**, the recent 55th Historian, and the current 55th Historian, **TSgt Dale McGavran**. The committee is tasked to document the untold history of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing.

We also discussed the feasibility of "Permanent Board Member" positions for those past officers who have served faithfully for a number of terms and want to continue, but in less active roles. More on this in Reno. Also discussed were candidate sites for the reunion in the spring of 2001.

After extensive sleuth work by **Robb Hoover**, we discovered that the late **Tom Buono** was one of two 55th SRW veterans (the other being **Bob Holbury**) whom we know of who received the Distinguished Service Cross in WWII. Among awards for heroism in combat, the DSC is second only to the Medal of Honor. For Air Force personnel the Air Force Cross replaced the DSC in 1960. Tom was cited for with this award as a B-17 navigator with the 303rd Bomb Group/8thAF "Hell's Angels", while flying out of Molesworth, England, 13 April 1944.

**Brian McGuire**, a Molesworth aviation historian, commissioned a lithograph, which commemorated this action. We have acquired two copies of the lithograph and will have them framed along with the DSC and citation, and

dedicate one in a ceremony at the Offutt O-club Raiders' Lounge for display near the 55th lithograph. The other will be presented at the reunion to Tom's wife **Della**, or one of their four children, if she is unable to attend.

Wing Historian and Association Board member **Craig Kibbe** retired from the AF at a 21 April ceremony and will continue as an active member of the Board at the pleasure of the membership. The 55th Wing Commander has nominated **Chief Master Sergeant Richard Casey**, the 55th Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant, to serve on the next board along with **LtCol Bo Marlin** as his representatives. Both are outstanding leaders and eager to serve the Association. This will be the second term for Bo.

The Board of Directors voted unanimously to grant the incumbent of the key 55<sup>th</sup> wing position of Wing Command Chief Master Sargent gratis membership into the Association. As with the other previously cited key positions given this status, once the individual leaves one of those positions and desires to continue membership, dues will be required to stay in good standing.

The Omaha Caucus, initially formed in late 1996, and which includes many local Association members and past and present members of the Board, has been totally

involved in the numerous social activities with the Wing. Therefore, we continue to enjoy a terrific relationship with the 55th Wing Commander and his outstanding personnel. Your Board of Directors is a dedicated group whose sole purpose is to further our proud heritage. They have done an outstanding job and it's been my great pleasure to work with them over the past two and a half years. Once again, thank you for the tremendous honor of serving as your Association president. **See you in Reno!**

*Videmus Omnia, Bill.*

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## NOMINATIONS FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

In April President Bill Ernst named **Sam Pizzo** to chair a nominating committee to seek members to stand for election to the Association Board of Directors. Sam asked **Sparky Adams** and **Max Moore** to serve on the committee.

It was the considered opinion of the committee that all current members of the Board had represented the membership well, conducted its business in a proper manner and made significant accomplishments. As a result, all current officers were asked if they wished to continue to be members of the Board. To a man they agreed to stand for

election. Even **TSgt Craig Kibbe**, who previously had been elected to the Board as the active duty enlisted representative, expressed his desire to continue to serve as a retiree. Craig retired from the Air Force after 20 years active duty, most recently as the award winning 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Historian.

The new active duty enlisted nominee is **CMSgt Richard Casey**, presently the 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant (a position formerly known as the Wing Senior Enlisted Advisor, or to you **really** seasoned veterans, the Wing "First Shirt"). We look forward with keen anticipation to his participation and the contributions his experience will enable him to make. **LtCol Bo Marlin** is again the Wing CC's active duty officer nominee.

Therefore, the following nominees will be placed before the general membership meeting at the Reno reunion: **Bill Ernst, Robb Hoover, Errol Hoberman, Ben White, Don Griffin, Charlie Waters, Sam Pizzo, Sparky Adams, Max Moore, Jim Maloney, LtCol Bo Marlin, CMSgt Richard Casey and Craig Kibbe.**

At the general membership business meeting, nominations may be made from the floor, as well.

*Submitted by Max Moore*

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## "A REAL JOB"

This exchange took place between Senators John Glenn and Howard Metzenbaum during a debate when Glenn first ran for the Senate: Senator Metzenbaum to Senator Glenn: "How can you run for the Senate when you've never held a "real job"?"

Senator Glenn: "I served 23 years in the United States Marine Corps. I served through two wars. I flew 149 missions. My plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire on 12 different occasions. I was in the space program. It wasn't my checkbook; it was my life on the line. It was not a 9-to-5 job where I took time off to take the daily cash receipts to the bank.

I ask you to go with me, as I went the other day, to a veterans' hospital and look at those men - with their mangled bodies - in the eye and tell them they didn't hold a job. You go with me to the space program and go, as I have gone, to the widows and orphans of Ed White and Gus Grissom and Roger Chaffee and you look those kids in the eye and tell them that their dads didn't hold a job. You go with me on Memorial Day coming up, and you stand in Arlington National Cemetery, where I have more friends than I'd like to remember - and you watch those waving flags, and you stand there, and you think about this nation, and you tell me that those people didn't have jobs. I'll tell you, Howard Metzenbaum, you should be on your knees every

day of your life thanking God that there were some men - **some men**, who held a job. And they required a dedication to purpose and a love of country and a dedication to duty that was more important than life itself. And their self-sacrifice is what made this country possible.

**I have held a job, Howard! What about you?"**  
*Contributed by Richard C. Mapp, a WW II P-47 pilot.*

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**QUESTION OF THE QUARTER**

Who was the first flyer (he was quite famous) to use the jet stream to enhance groundspeed?

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**RETURNED, NO FORWARDING ADDRESS**

**Randy Timmons  
William R Smith  
Mrs. Betty Wesson  
Mrs. Margaret Glover**

If you know the current addresses of any of the above, please provide them to Treasurer and Membership Chairman:  
**Errol S. Hoberman**

**6441 Avenida De Galvez  
Navarre, FL 32566-8911  
Phone: 850 939 5231  
Or e-mail:  
[RavenOne@fwbnet.com](mailto:RavenOne@fwbnet.com)**

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

As of 15 May 1999, the Association had 1005 members in good standing, 155 of which are exempt from paying dues. This is an increase of 25 new members since 31 December 1998. **331 members have not renewed memberships that expired in 1998, \$10.00 is due.** Otherwise, this will be the last newsletter you will receive. The year your dues expire can be found in the **upper right hand corner of the mailing label** for this newsletter. Please remit to 55SRW Association and mail to Errol Hoberman at your earliest convenience.

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**LIGHTNING BOLTS, SANDSTORMS AND SNOW**

This is written especially for all the plastic airplane drivers, and also for those with large plastic canopies on metal airframes ala RVs.

First, a little history. In the ancient 50's the Air Force had a new jet fighter called the P-80 'Shooting Star'. In two years time, squadrons training in West Texas, New Mexico and Arizona had an unusually high accident rate with many fatalities. The usual safety investigations had failed to turn up any positive reasons for the crashes. In early 1954 a P-80 was found gear up

and intact in the sand at the White Sands Missile Range, the plane was basically undamaged, but the young Air Force captain was dead. The fuel tanks were empty and the electrical system and radios were burned out. The cause remained a mystery until a detailed autopsy on the pilot found a small hole about the size of a pin from the top of his skull to underneath the jaw. A re-look at the P-80 revealed some dark area in the top of the canopy and the pilot's Gentex helmet had a small hole through the helmet that corresponded with the hole in the pilot's skull. The final accident report listed the cause of the accident as: "electrically incapacitated pilot losing control



of the aircraft causing premature arrival at the ground" (You have very little control when you are dead).

The company I worked for at the time received a contract to instrument a new P-80 from Lockheed along with a companion two-place T-33. The plan was to fly them around in the Southwest and take some voltage measurements. One after-noon early in the program the P-80 landed after skirting a thunder bumper hanging north of the field at Albuquerque. The



approach also took the pilot through a nice dust devil cloud off the end of the runway. After rollout and taxi back to the ramp, prior to the pilot opening the canopy, we measured the voltage on the canopy compared to the metal airframe and it measured 2.53 million volts! A charge had built up on the canopy from the electrical field surrounding the thunder bumper and also the dust cloud. We discharged the canopy with a lead pencil before the pilot got out and the arc set the wood pencil on fire. At this point our intrepid civilian test pilot decided that selling insurance was now his chosen profession and we began the search for new pilot. Before the next series of flights, we installed a four-inch square of copper screen in the top of the canopy with tape and ran a wire from the screen to the metal canopy frame. By this time the Air Force was in full panic mode and grounded all the P-80s and T-33s until a copper wire grid was installed with a ground wire to the canopy frame. The specification for the standard Gentex hard hat was changed to require each production helmet to be able to withstand a 5-million volt 'Hi-Pot' test prior to acceptance. That winter further flights in some snow storms produced the same high voltages on the canopy. At this point it was agreed that the culprit was precipitation static caused by dust or snow in the flight path. To this day all military aircraft with plastic canopies have a wire

grid tied to the frame and grounded. Flight helmets still get 'hi-potted'. Now I know we homebuilt airplane drivers don't go flying our pride and joy around in thunder, dust, or snow storms but I installed some thin copper tape in the canopy and windshield frames and tied these to a ground plane on my Glasair. In addition, all metal parts (yes there are some in a Glasair) were bonded together to the engine, which was tied with a large gauge wire out to a static discharge wick on the wing tip. The whole set-up weighed nine ounces installed. In my many trips back and forth to California I have flown through a few dust storms and even one snow storm in far west Texas and I never worried and I didn't have on a Gentex helmet either. *Contributed by Gene Spaulding.*

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### CARDS & LETTERS

Ben,  
The mention of **Mattison** in the newsletter brought to mind three stories about him. On the day of his incident with the North Korean MIG, or maybe a day after, I had supervisor of flying duty that night in the command post. With lots of time I read the report of the entire incident. I was very impressed with Hobart's handling of the aircraft after they got away from the area. As I remember, there were many holes in the plane and a wicked weight and balance problem because of the inability to transfer fuel. Hobart, and

crew did every thing that should have been done, and in the proper sequence for a safe return. I am not sure many of us could have done so well under the circumstances.  
2. In the early 60's General Nielson, the Division CO, decided he wanted a golf course (at Forbes). The location was behind the supply depot near Capehart housing. Each of the flying squadrons was assigned a golf green as a project, and each day we sent a crew out to rake and pick up rocks. I happened to be a young captain with an additional duty assignment as one of many assistant training officers who selected the crews to work on the course. To make it short, hell hath no fury like a LtCol (and crew) assigned to do grunt jobs when he (they) didn't even play golf. When Hobart stopped by training to make his protest, guys scattered out of there fast!  
3. As I remember Hobart always wore his bill cap with the f---s and darts on it. He also had one of those outside eagles on it, which was much taller than the regulation ones. I think **Sparky Adams** was the ops officer in the 38th with an office on the second floor, and frequently, Hobart would be there to do "stuff". When he did he almost always left his cap on the top rail of the staircase. The standing rule for the younger officers was that if you found Hobart's cap on the rail you were obligated to turn the eagle upside down.

Sometimes it was days before he would notice. If my memory is correct, **Bill Henderson**, the crow, was the instigator of this policy and it's chief practitioner Ah, those were the days!

Regards, **Roby Craft**.

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## WASHATERIA TYCOON

Hi, Maybe it is time for a little something light in our 55<sup>th</sup> newsletter.

I hold no claim to military fame. I can claim to have cornered the washateria market at Ramey AFB about 50 years ago. Some details are fuzzy but the story is basically true.

When we moved from Barksdale to Ramey, our billets were in a long wooden building, typical of the type in which chickens are mass-produced today. A suite with private bath at each end, regular rooms along the center portion and a communal bath and shower in the middle – those were our quarters. **Bill Lowman** and **Tiger Tagan** (and maybe **Bill Blanchard**?) shared a suite at one end. I shared the other suite with an air rescue pilot. “**Enrico**” **Manzo** was somewhere in between and kept us entertained with his early morning operatic arias. How he could wake up so happy, I'll never understand.

There was no washer, dryer or refrigerator in the BOQ area and, thus, the opportunity to turn a negative into a positive -

or should I say a profit? – presented itself.

On a flight to Barksdale with AC **Pappy Cole**, Willie Lowman and I got to talking about our situation. His primary interest was in cold beer; mine was in clean drawers – particularly after some of those practice GCA landings at the 3,000-foot runway just above a cliff at GITMO that scared the living you-know-what out of me.

In Shreveport we went to a junkyard. I found a turn-of-the-century wringer type washer and Willie found a 19-ought-5 model wooden icebox. Don't know what he paid for his icebox but I plunked down \$35.00 for the washer – delivered to the flight line. Can't recall the type of aircraft, but we managed to get both items aboard and up, up and away we went.

Willie set up and started the fridge in his suite and though a bit noisy, it did work and the saloon opened for business. With requirements for water, a drain and electricity, the washateria operation was a bit more complicated. The only place I could find for it was in the communal shower which was an open bay type about 15 feet wide with three or four shower heads. I set it up in one corner and was prepared for the birth of the Ramey washateria, electric shock hazard and all. Or maybe we rolled it in and out?

As word got around, that our building had a washer, and more outsiders showed up. Soon people were standing in line –

even some from off base.

When the first load of baby diapers showed up, I had to draw the line. Something had to be done to control the situation. I formed the “Wash Your Own Club” with a \$1.00 initiation fee. I posted a list of members with a warning that use of the washer was limited to MEMBERS ONLY and for others to see me if they wanted to join my exclusive organization.

You will never believe how many people wanted to sign up – even tech reps. I would go away for a few days and on return, people would be lined up chomping at the bit to join. Since I had no way to expand the laundry facility, and my objective was clean drawers, not profit, I had to settle for the status quo and close the membership.

But the venture did not end there. Over much strong resistance from the billeting officer, and on the basis that he owed it to his BOQ patrons, I sold him the washer for \$35.00, recovering my investment, before I sailed off into the sunset. (*Charlie, aren't we Air Force folks supposed to fly off into the wild blue yonder? Ed.*) Willie Lowman never told me the fate of the fridge.

There were a few, even one female, who would sneak in late at night, do a load or two and sneak out. I could hear the noisy machine and I knew who they were but gave them the benefit of the doubt, thinking they would see me later and sign up. They

didn't. And I haven't calculated what a buck at 6% interest for 50 years would come to. But if I ever see any of them again (and they know who they are) I expect them to fess up and buy old Charlie a drink.

*Submitted by Charles Benyunes*

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**MR. GORSKY  
A TRUE STORY  
(Allegedly)**

When Apollo Astronaut Neil Armstrong first walked on the moon, he not only gave his famous "...one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind..." statement, but followed it by several remarks, usual communication traffic between him and the other astronauts and mission control.

Just before he re-entered the lander, however, he made the enigmatic remark, "Good luck, Mr. Gorsky."

Many people at NASA thought it was a casual remark concerning some rival Soviet cosmonaut. However, upon checking, there was no Gorsky in either the Russian or American space program.

Over the years many people questioned Armstrong as to what the "Good luck, Mr. Gorsky" statement meant, but Armstrong always just smiled without comment.

On July 15, 1995 in Tampa Bay, FL, while answering questions following a speech, a reporter brought up the 26-year-

old question. This time he finally responded. Mr. Gorsky had died and so Neil Armstrong felt he could answer the question.

When he was a kid, he was playing baseball in the back yard. His friend hit a fly ball, which landed in the front of his neighbor's bedroom windows. His neighbors were Mr. and Mrs. Grosky.

As he leaned down to pick up the ball, young Armstrong heard Mrs. Gorsky shouting at Mr. Gorsky, "Sex! You want sex? You'll get sex when the kid next door walks on the moon!"

*Submitted by Billy R. Cooper, Col, USAF (Ret.)*

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**T A P S**



**Peter M. Bertemes**

**Thomas J. Buono**

**Raymond E. DeRosia**

**Horace "Red" Haire**

**Harold C. Noltensmeier**

**Paul "Skip" Orr**

**William E. Riggs**

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**ANSWER**

Wiley Post was the first pilot known to have flight planned so as to take advantage of the jet stream to improve his speed over the ground.

*Source: Will Rogers' biography*

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

The next 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Birthday Ball will be held Saturday, 29 January 2000 at the Embassy Suites near Omaha's Old Market and ConAgra World Headquarters.

Mark the date on your calendars if you care. The most recent Ball was a great success and one of the most elegant in recent memory. Eighteen heroes of the Wing's past were honored and there were nearly 100 Association members and guests in attendance.

For those who receive invitations, please RSVP whatever your intentions. If you no longer want to be invited in the future, indicate as such on your response and your name will be removed from the list. The Association provides the 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Protocol Office with our membership roster to be used for mailing invitations. That roster does not contain rank nor marital status. So please do not vent your displeasure on that office regarding how the invitation was addressed. Protocol personnel do not have the resources to research that information.



Some responders have suggested it is too cold in Omaha in January (Duh!), and that the Ball be held during more pleasant climes. The Ball is traditionally held close to the original activation date of the 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group. So, send all complaints to **Reg Urschler**. The Ball is his brain baby.

*Submitted by Max Moore*

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### **UH-OH, AN RB 47 ADVENTURE**

My crew flew to Okinawa to replace a 55<sup>th</sup> standboard crew to pull a TDY tour there. We flew out on one of the wing's KC-97 tankers. There were stops at March AFB, CA, Hawaii and Guam along the way.

As far as our Raven Three was concerned, the KC-97 was instantaneous transportation. His mode of operation was to hit a bar, get blind staggering drunk as quickly as he could. We would pour him back on board the plane and he would pass out for the duration of that leg. He would wake up when we landed at the next stop and repeat the cycle. He said, as far as he was concerned, no time passed between stops, cause he was in 'la la land'. So, it was instant transportation in his mind.

We took an engine specialist along with us to Kadena. He went to work on the RB-47H soon after arrival and reported some very bad news.

His inspection indicated that five of the engines had been operated for extended periods in overheat condition – thus requiring all five engines to be changed. So, we had a week off to enjoy Okinawa's beaches, bars and bathhouses.

When the engine changes were completed, a test hop was required before we could fly an operational mission. The entire crew went along on the test hop so as to check out all the recon systems.

We were lined up on the runway with all engines at 100%. Water-alcohol injection was activated and brakes released. The old girl had a very light fuel load, so leapt away and accelerated rapidly. On reaching about half the speed needed for take-off, all three engines on the left wing abruptly quit. The water-alcohol was contaminated; this killed the engines. The plane went down the runway like a Frisbee, finally stopping on a taxiway.

Three more engine changes and extensive landing gear maintenance were required. More down time for the crew. We were becoming well known in the local joints.

Ten days later we flew another test hop without incident. Drat it. Looked like we were finally going to have to go to work.

We were anxious to get our first operational mission behind us as we would get our theater spot promotions for the

tour only after completing the initial sortie.

We lined up and roared down the runway trailing heavy, black smoke from the water injection. We were nearing takeoff speed and the water was still good. It looked like a go, finally.

Our AC was a very quiet guy known as "**Silent George**," and a great pilot. He remained as cool under any circumstance. Nothing rattled George. He had been a B-17 pilot during WWII and had had three planes shot from under him. Then he had flown the Berlin airlift, later followed by B-29 missions during the Korean War. All those experiences conditioned him to be shot at and dumped upon. He never got excited. On this first mission out of Kadena, his calling, of "gear up," was followed a couple of seconds later by "uh-oh." When you got "uh-oh", or "Jeez" out of George, you knew it was serious stuff. Those were his extreme reactions. I looked up from my seat in the aisle to see George rapidly cranking in the trim and straining against the rudder and ailerons.

The number six engine (the only one that had not been changed) had frozen up and broken off. When it did so, it also snapped part of the wing off at the engine mount. George trimmed the airplane and climbed out as best the old bird would do. We were being bombarded by calls from the tower, telling us we had left a

good bit of our airplane on the field. George had not yet declared an emergency, nor had he decided to abort the mission, so we were still under strict radio silence.

He leveled at a medium altitude and had the copilot compute our fuel consumption to see if we could fly the mission. The fuel was being sucked up fast, so George decided to abort. We had to bore holes for hours in order to burn enough fuel to get the aircraft light enough to land (a situation all B-47 types are familiar with). Once we were on the ground, we again had down time in which to terrorize the natives for another three days waiting for a replacement aircraft to arrive.

We were now so far behind schedule that when we at last got under way, we planned and briefed four missions at once then flew four days in a row. Took one day to plan and brief four more missions, then flew those. We lived on that routine for the next three weeks to get caught up. The local economy suffered badly during that period.

*Contributed by Bruce Bailey*

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**Actual Lines from OERs**

Takes him two hours to watch "60 Minutes".

Donated his brain to science before he was done using it.

Has reached rock bottom and started to dig.

**YOUR 55<sup>TH</sup> WEB SITE**  
[www.55srwa.org](http://www.55srwa.org)

If you have not yet been there, go and you are in for a treat. **Webmeister Don Griffin** and his able sidekick, **Dave Johnson**, have put together a virtual cyber-work of art and wonder. Everything you want to know about the Association is there: constitution, bylaws, officers and bios; membership form, library, picture gallery, e-mails and e-mail address listing, bulletin board and links to many other sites of interest. Just like a fine wine, it gets better with aging. (You might say the same for our members.)

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**COLD WAR, 55<sup>th</sup>  
TO BE ON TV**

The History Channel will air a special program, "Top Secret Spy Flights of the Cold War" on Sunday evening, August 1, 1999.

Included features are: **John Wagner** discussing RB-50 flights in support of the beleaguered French garrison at Dien Bien Phu in 1954; **Hal Austin** detailing his Kola Peninsula flight in May 1954 in an RB-47E and being attacked by Russian MiG-17s; the C-130 shootdown in 1958 (briefed at our Colorado Springs reunion) and interviews with **Bruce Olmstead** and **John McKone** about their RB-47H being shot down in July 1960.



**ASSOCIATION  
BUSINESS &  
MEMBERSHIP  
SOURCES**

**Business/Policy/Reunion  
Suggestions:**

President Bill Ernst  
410 Greenbriar Court  
Bellevue, NE 68005  
e-mail: [BillErnst@aol.com](mailto:BillErnst@aol.com)

**Association/Wing History:**

Vice President Robb Hoover  
13412 Tregaron Circle  
Bellevue, NE 68123  
e-mail: [RobbHoover@aol.com](mailto:RobbHoover@aol.com)

**Membership Dues/Changes of  
Address:**

Treasurer Errol Hoberman  
6441 Avenida De Galvez  
Navarre, FL 32566  
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[RavenOne@fwbnet.com](mailto:RavenOne@fwbnet.com)

**Newsletter Articles/Letters:**

Secretary Ben White  
628 Skimmer Court  
Corolla, NC 27927  
e-mail:  
[benwhite@beachlink.com](mailto:benwhite@beachlink.com)

**TAPS** – News of Association members and associates taking the "Big PCS" should be sent to **both** Bill Ernst and Ben White. Please include next of kin and an address to which the Association condolence card may be sent, date of demise, etc.

**Association Web Page  
Comments/Ideas**

Don Griffin  
e-mail: [dgrif@ns.net](mailto:dgrif@ns.net)

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

**September 30 - October 2, 1999**

**REUNION REGISTRATION FORM**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Guest Name (for nametag) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

[X] Registration Fee \$10 (Includes hospitality room) = \_\_\_\_\_

**ACTIVITES OPTIONS (Costs are per person)**

[ ] Golf Outing **AND** Virginia City Tour.....\$114 X\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Sierra Sage Golf Outing **Only**.....\$56 X\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Virginia City Tour **Only**.....\$58 X\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] MS Dixie Paddlewheel Tour..... \$31 X\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Saturday Grand Banquet (Harrah's Auto Museum)

Please circle your dinner choice(s): #1 #2 #3 #4 \$\_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

*(See page 2, center column, for meal options and costs)*

GRAND TOTAL= \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to: DON GURNEY**

**SEND COMPLETED FORM AND PAYMENTS TO BE RECEIVED**

**NOT LATER THAN AUGUST 25, 1999**

**TO :**

**Don Gurney, PO Box 2530, Carson City, NV 89702**

**It is suggested you make a copy of the completed form as a reminder.**

