

Videmus Omnia

55th WING ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2017

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



As you read this latest “*Max creation*”, I trust you’ll agree the sheer quantity of **Association** activities since our Tampa Reunion in April is nearly overwhelming. Though **Jim Thomas** is an incredible mentor and difficult act to follow, I am not sure either of us realized the extent of responsibilities in the recent months would be so chock full.

Reunions are incredible, and this year’s was a tremendous success due largely to our “man on the ground” in Tampa, **Richard Ray**. Thanks again, Rich!

However, there was, truly, no rest for the weary. We followed Tampa with planning our traditional Wing Commander dinner welcoming **Colonel Michael “Gravy” Manion** to the *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth*. Hats off to **Mark Schenck** for coordinating the evening.

On the heels of this, the **Association** prepared to honor **Bruce Olmstead’s** Arlington interment with 100+ attendees, an RC-135 fly-over, and unprecedented media/press coverage.

With **Scotty Dowell** steering the **Wing’s** flight scheduling/execution process, our Vice President, **Ricky McMahon**, led the **Association’s** contingent at this hallowed event. Thanks to Ricky Mac and Scotty for turning an idea into reality.

As the *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* dealt with rescheduling its annual Ball into September, the **Association’s** planning for Heritage Week success began in earnest. Several **Association** members attended traditional squadron events around the **Wing**.

Max Moore represented the **Association** on the “Top Three’s” Ball committee, and **Don “Bits” Bacon** was the evening’s featured speaker with **Reg Urschler** cutting the traditional cake.

Michael Cook, our treasurer, ensured the **Association** was able to double our “usual” contribution to the Ball. Thanks to your Board of Directors for approving this generous gesture.

Jim Thomas ably guided the *Tales of the 55th* docket. **Ham Kennedy** masterfully led steering and selection committees to honor Excellence Trophy and Hall of Fame candidates.

Throughout the summer, many of us also attended several wing, group and squadron changes of command, reestablishing legacy contacts and creating new relationships.

Behind the scenes, **Bill Sargent** brought the “BX” to the WG/CC dinner, edited/managed “*Tales*” presentations; as well as, made sure the Excellence Trophy updates were completed. WHEW!

Time for a much-needed/deserved break and a sincere **thanks to all** providing the best “PR” face for the **Association**.

Following this lull in activity, I intend to challenge our Board and members-at-large to brainstorm ideas to enhance our *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* role of “*Honoring those who served; and serving those who do*”.

Glimpsing into our “crystal ball” are ideas mostly centered on increasing **Association** membership enrollment with post-SAC era 55th alums and today’s active duty members.

As **Paul Harvey** would say, “Stand-by, for NEWS!”, as you peruse this issue of *VO*.

Videmus Omnia, Joe Spivey



Note the plate, SPY V. Clever, huh?

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS DIRECTORY

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hamiltonwilsonkennedy@gmail.com

Other Members of the Board of Directors:

Bill Ernst, Jim Thomas, Errol Hoberman, Fox Censullo, George Ross, Don Kelly, Paul Jeanes, Val Dugie, Colonel Mohan Krishna.
Active Duty: LtCol David Preisman.

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Active Duty Board member, **LtCol Preisman**, relinquished command of the 238th Combat Training Squadron on 27 October, then assumed command of the 170th Group on 4 November. He will be promoted to colonel in February.

Congratulations to Dave on his onward and upward progression.
Hoo-rah!!

Both organizations are Nebraska Air National Guard units actively attached to the **55th Operations Group**.

They provide total force integration of guard personnel to assist in air crew training with the 338th Combat Training Squadron.

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Appointed Historian:

William (Bill) Sargent

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Appointed Enlisted Affairs Liaison:

Elvio Palmieri

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DINNER WITH NEW 55TH WING COMMANDER

Members of the Offutt-area (plus two fly-ins) **55th Wing Association** met with **55th Wing Commander, Colonel Michael (Gravy) Manion** for an informal social hour and dinner on 20 July 2017. The event was held at Anthony's Steakhouse, a long time favorite restaurant in Omaha.

Colonel Manion assumed command of the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** on 8 June.

He is the thirteenth commander to be so hosted in a tradition that began in December 1996 by then-president **Bill Ernst**. This event provides an opportunity for the new commander to meet **55th** veterans in a social setting early in his tenure. The group has **no** agenda other than the success of the **Wing**, and to let the commander know we have, and are, resources to be used to support that effort.

A 1995 graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia (ROTC DMG), Col Manion's previous command was vice commander, 39th Air Base Wing, Incirlik, Turkey, from June 2016.

Although he is a career EC-130 (COMPASS CALL) navigator/EWO, he has had a varied career with multiple assignments in the **55th** Electronic Combat Group (ECG) at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ; and in Haiti, Afghanistan, Korea, and the UK, among others.

(The **55th** ECG at D-M is one of six groups under the **55th** Wing, and has been since February 2003.);

The evening began with a casual social hour, and introductions. **Steve Stevens** related the Tale of the Bell, then Col Manion rang the ceremonial bell. During the social time he met and got acquainted with those attending.



Congressman Bacon, Stevens, Col Manion at the Bell.

President Joe Spivey made welcoming introductions, and the group enjoyed dinner. Each one there was given the opportunity to relate their Air Force history and time with the **55th** in a crisp round-robin.

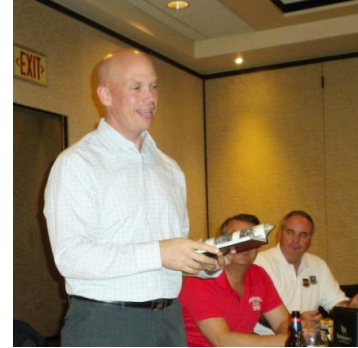
President Spivey also presented Col Manion with a copy of "*We See All*", **Bruce Bailey's** book of **55th** pictorial history, reading a cover page inscription.

Col Manion addressed the group expressing his pleasure with meeting everyone, hearing the stories, and the gathering in general.

He also told how he got his nickname: Gravy.

The short version being about him, as a Missouri country guy in a high-end restaurant, and wondering if he could get some gravy on his gourmet meat and potatoes.

Those at the event were: **Association** Board members: Spivey, Vice President Ricky McMahon, past presidents Ernst and Thomas; Max Moore, Don Kelly, Jim Maloney, Paul Jeanes, Ham Kennedy and LtCol Dave Preisman. Former wing commanders Congressman (BrigGen-Retired) Don Bacon (R-NE 2nd) and Steve Stevens attended. Also at the event were **Hank Dubuy, John Tresmer, Chris Canada, Dutch Van Denburg, Ben Ungerman**, and Bill Sargent.



In the traditional lodge pose: Seated in front, L-R: Stevens, Bacon, Col Manion, Ernst, Spivey.

In Back: Thomas, Dubuy, Kennedy, Kelly, Preisman, Van Denburg, Tresmer, Canada, Jeanes, McMahon, Maloney, Ungerman, Moore.

(Photos by Moore)



SUMMER OF CHANGE

Seemingly, every summer brings about command movements, PCS, etc., but this past one was **extraordinary** for the **55th** Wing.

In addition to the main man, there were **four** (of six) group changes of command (Medical, Mission

Support, Communications, and Electronic Combat); plus **eleven** squadron commander changes at Offutt and Davis-Monthan. One or more local **Association** Board members usually attend these events, when possible, to “show the shirt or tie”, as appropriate.

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TREASURER’S REPORT

Please remember that the **Association** is a **non-profit IRS 501(C) 19 veterans, federal tax exempt organization.**



(See the **Association** web site:http://www.55wa.org/CORP_HQ/TaxExemptStatus.html). As such, you may **donate** additional funds to the treasury, or in the memory of a comrade taking that final flight.

Those **donations (NOT DUES)** are tax deductible under an IRS ruling for the organization. Every amount, large or small, is very much appreciated. It happens, and thank you very much.

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As of 31 October 2017, the treasury had an account balance (rounded) of \$47,000.

A significant portion of the money in the account comes from dues paid in advance. Therefore, we must keep money in reserve for each year to which the dues apply. For example, dues paid for year thru 2020 **cannot** be spent until the ensuing calendar years.

Some members have paid for several years in advance. One gent is covered through **2031**. Now that is loyalty **and** optimism, folks.

Although the **Association** is solvent, we have expenses, obligations, and bills to pay, such as this newsletter and the postage.

It is never too soon to renew your membership. So, please pay your dues promptly, or early and often. Right now would be a good time. *Thank you very much, s'more.*

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MEMBERSHIP REPORT

There were 486 members in good standing as of 31 October 2017, compared with 470 on 30 June 2017.

This newsletter is being sent to 32 members whose dues expired on 1 April hoping they will be encouraged to return to the fold.

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Interesting (and sobering) facts: In 1998 there were **1441** names on the **Association** roster, a compiled list of former members of the **55th SRW**. However, just **515** were dues payers. The treasury also had about \$11,000, then.

In April 2007 membership **peaked at 1005**; yeah-but, in those days widows and associate members counted as ‘in good standing’.

Due to compliance with IRS rules, 90% of the membership **must be veterans** to hold the 501(C) tax exempt status. Thus, widows are now in a separate category, associate members were reduced, and sadly, Father Time and the Grim Reaper have taken their toll. Unfortunately, dues and members do expire. (See *TAPS*.)

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About 150 widows receive the newsletter gratis. As always, they are welcome to any and all **Association** functions.

Fifty-one **55th Wing** and associated units and offices are sent the newsletter for PR purposes, and to keep them connected with the **Association**.

Occasionally, this effort has a payoff of exposure for the **Association** and new active duty members, now at **22**.

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WHEN DO MY DUES EXPIRE?

That is the most asked question of the membership chairman. **That date is on the address label to the RIGHT of your name in bold print: 20XX. Please make a note to keep up with your dues.**

Life Members (LM) and widows are dues exempt.

If you are not sure of, or have a question about, your dues expiration date for whatever reason, to inquire on same, please e-mail **Michael.Cook@cox.net**; or drop him a note at the following address to get an update on your membership status. *When in doubt, send money.*



Please pay your dues prior to 31 December of your expiration year; but no later than 31 March of the following year to remain in good standing.

Mail to: 55th Wing Association

ATTN: Michael J. Cook

PO Box 13165

Offutt AFB, NE 68113

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**PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY ASSOCIATION
CORRESPONDENCE TO MICHAEL'S HOME
ADDRESS, JUST TO THE ASSOCIATION PO BOX.**

THANK YOU.

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Please help us stay current.

There is a membership/information update form at page 27 of this newsletter, as well as on the Association web site.

Please use that form any time you pay dues, and/or to report any address or other changes in your contact information. That is the best way to ensure we have your latest information on file.

It is imperative to update your latest contact information, especially if you have relocated, changed your e-address, etc., within the past six months.

If you own more than one home, please give us the address you want any Association correspondence mailed to, and to go into our data base.

ALL CORRESPONDENCE WILL BE SENT TO YOUR HOME OF RECORD.

Invariably we get returned mail because of outdated addresses. Third class mail is **not** forwarded, nor returned to us.

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RECRUITING MEMBERS TO THE ASSOCIATION

Retaining members, and recruiting new ones, is a recurring and never ending priority. It is the life blood of any organization.

There has been a noticeable **up-tick** in the membership, due to diligent efforts of some current members. Lapsed members returning, new sign ups of troops who have not belonged in the past, etc.

More than 20 packages were mailed to those folks in July and August, after the newsletter and directory went out.

When anyone recruits new members, those potentials may ask questions or have concerns. Here are some tips to point out to those who are apprehensive about joining:

1) **No meetings** except at reunions. Alleviates concerns of time and commitments.

2) The **Association** has **no HHQ to answer to**: no quotas, no required reports up channel, etc.

3) We have **no problem filling** officer slots, Board, or committees. Usually newbies think they may be tapped for those sorts of things as happens in other organizations.

4) Belonging is a major way to **stay connected** with former and current **Wing** members; know about events the **Association** is doing; and news of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* and Offutt. (Newsletter, web site, et al.)

Feel free to retain this for future reference as needed. Add your own tips, as well.

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THE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

What is the first thing you do when you get a new directory? You look up yourself to see what's there, huh?

Then, if something is amiss, most comments are some version of: "My (insert item) is wrong!!" Usually, a more correct term should be 'outdated'.



That did not happen much with the July issue; but, we did get about 30 packages returned. Most were for **UNABLE TO FORWARD** because those who relocated over a year before July, and the USPS does not forward after that time.

But, if members relocate and do not tell us, how can we know? Changes are even more prevalent with e-mail addresses as folks drop or change servers, or revise their e-addresses.

If/when mail is returned to the **Association**, then 'we' research and try to locate those members, or widows, and resend when possible. Some folks we were unable to locate and others were deceased.

Lapsed members return and new ones join. Thus, we have produced **errata pages for the Directory** which are included at the back of this newsletter FYI.

It is each member's responsibility to keep us updated. We need everyone's help in keeping all the contact info current.

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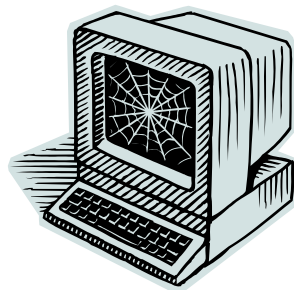
YOUR 55TH WING ASSOCIATION WEB SITE

www.55wa.org

The **Association** web site remains an integral and important part of the **Association's** communications. It is where one can keep informed between newsletters, and where news and information are reported and updated in a timely manner.

The home page NOTAMS list includes many recent and interesting postings.

The **BX** section is where to find how to purchase **Association** items.



Articles are added to the **Memory Lane** section as they are submitted. Please contribute **your own** to share.

Also, be sure to check out, contribute, and indicate you "Like" the *Facebook* page at <http://www.facebook.com/55thAssociation>.

Check the web site regularly for the latest information on the next reunion, Heritage Week activities, and other significant events.

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A link is in the Members Only page, where any member can check on his/her DUES EXPIRATION DATE. This area is updated periodically and may not reflect recent renewals.

Also on the front page is an area for members to enter their email address, and then they will be notified when there's been a change or update to the web site.

This page also contains a "Lost and Found" section where members can search for information about how to contact friends and former crewmates.

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Any member who wishes to read and/or download **Association** newsletters from the web site can do so. That allows members to read the latest issue as soon as it is published, as well as read it wherever in the world one might be at anytime.

Newsletters are **usually** published about four months **before** a reunion, a couple of months **after** a reunion, and about six months from that one.

Based on that 'schedule', you just have to make periodic look-ins at the web site to find out.

(Ed. Note: this issue is out of the 'normal' cycle, and the next one may be in the spring of 2018.)

In order to do so, you need to visit the **Members Only** page on the web site, and read, or download the newsletter from there. **Simply request the username and password from the web-guy and you're all set.**

You must be a dues paid, member-in-good-standing to gain the password and access

Past newsletters dating to February 1998 are archived, as well, and can be accessed on the home page. It is interesting to see how it has evolved over time.

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OLMSTEAD CEREMONY AT ARLINGTON

Colonel F. Bruce Olmstead (USAF Retired), an authentic *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* hero, died 14 October 2016. However, he had to be in the usual queue to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Subsequently, his widow, **Gail**, informed the **Association** that his ceremony was scheduled for 1100 on Thursday, 27 July 2017, with a reception to follow at the Ft Myer Officers Club.

A contingent of **55th** alumni in the DC/VA/MD area, organized and coordinated by **55th Association** vice president **Ricky McMahon**, and **Association** secretary **Trish Seinwill**, attended the funeral ceremony, as did several other **55th** veterans from other parts of the country, (Nebraska, Texas, Florida, West Virginia).

The ceremony was with full military honors: horse drawn caisson, rifle team, honor guard/pallbearers, bugler, and the band. **Air Force Chaplain (Capt) Scott Foust** did the eulogy covering Col Olmstead's career and life.

Major General John Rauch, Director of Future Warfare for ISR, and a former **55th Wing** commander, presided over the ceremony and presented Olmstead's widow, Gail, with a folded American flag, as other members of his family and many friends looked on during the tradition rich and solemn event.



A dramatic moment came with the fly-by of an RC-135 V/W. Trish Seinwill's comment: *"The flyover was beautiful. Bright sky. Shiny airplane. Lots of antennas. Folks were impressed. Nearly perfect timing."*



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Not incidentally, the flyover was the culmination of a process set in motion last February when then-**Association** President **Jim Thomas** informed **Colonel David Berg**, the **55th Wing** Vice Commander, of the ceremony's date.

This was historic, and a positive example of how the **55th Wing** and the **55th Wing Association** worked in concert to get an important and meaningful event accomplished.

The sortie was a fully authorized training mission with five check rides. Aircraft commander was **Captain Brandon Paterson**, Tactical Coordinator **LtCol Mark Howard**; and Airborne Mission Supervisor **MSgt Aaron Jarvis**.

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Estimated attendance ranged from 100-150 people, including **Linda Schilder**, the daughter of **Capt Oscar Goforth**, Olmstead's crewmate, who perished on 1 July 1960 in the infamous Soviet shootdown of a **55th** RB-47; and veterans from Bruce's time at Forbes AFB, KS; **Reg Urschler**, **Tom Shepherd**, **Wolf Samuel** and Hank and **Sandra Dubuy**.

Congressman (BrigGen, Retired) Don Bacon (another former **55th Wing** commander) and **Association** President Joe Spivey headed other

generations of **55th**'ers, family and friends: including **Association** past-president Bill Ernst and his daughter **Meagan Abboud**; **Bo** and **Ann Marlin**, **Jeff Seinwill** (with his father and friend), Val Dugie, Colonel Mo Krishna, **Colonel Kurt Koenigsfeld**, **Dean Yount**, **Bill McKechnie**, **Stuart Martin**, **Steve Taylor**, **Dave Erteschik**, **Steve Pietruszka**, and **Grady Eakins**

Other guests were: **Rick** and **Elissa Davis**, **Bill Dennis**, **Craig Allen**, **Dennis Gillon**, **Mike Meermans**, **Joe Federation**, **SMSgt Chris Regan**, **Stuart Latta**, **Major Andy Maus**, **LtCol Ed Marquez**, **LtCol Ryan Connor**, **Major James Smith**, **Doug Kliest**, **Jo Hedge**, and **Donna Rogers**, plus the proverbial "cast of thousands", i.e.: impossible to know and name everyone there.

(Photos by Spivey.)

(Letters and more pictures follow.)

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55th WING COMMANDER ANNOUNCES HERITAGE WEEK

From: MANION, MICHAEL H, Colonel, **55 WG/CC**

Sent: Friday, August 11, 2017

Subject: **55 Wing Heritage Week**, 3-9 September 2017

Commanders:

The week of 3 - 9 September is **55th Wing** Heritage Week! As you are all aware, the Air Force and Wing Birthday Ball is on 9 Sep -- which will be the culminating event of Heritage Week.

I ask you to use that week to celebrate a specific Heritage event at some point during the week.

On Friday, 8 Sep, the **Wing** will host the **55th Wing** Hall of Fame Induction and *Tales of the 55th* Heritage Event in the Bennie Davis Maintenance Complex, Dock 1. Events will begin at 1300 and last until 1630.

Each flying unit will host a Heritage Table set up in Dock 1 for this event. I ask Group commanders of non-flying units, to please select a representative from your group responsible for a display table.

This has lots of flexibility....CG can have a tactical radio display; MSG can have the MWD set-up; etc. I just want to celebrate the heritage of the entire **55th Wing**!

You have complete flexibility on how celebrate your heritage (BBQ, Fun Run, etc.). This isn't meant to be a science project. Just a fun way to celebrate our heritage!

Colonel Mike Manion, 55 WG/CC
"Fightin' Fifty-Fifth - Leads the Fight!"

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HALL OF FAME CEREMONY

To open the Hall and Tales events, this honored group of Hall of Fame members joined Colonel Manion, each ringing the 55th Ceremonial Bell.



L to R: Reg Urschler, Hank Dubuy, Ricky McMahon, Larry Mitchell, Bill Ernst, Steve Stevens, James Taylor, Col Manion.

*(Moore took the photo and was not fast enough to join **this** line-up.)*

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Friday, 8 September, a large audience of active duty personnel, veteran 55thers, and guests, attended a program to induct two new members into the 55th Wing Hall of Fame

Association President Spivey conducted the event in Dock 1 of the 55th maintenance facility. Colonel Michael Manion, 55th Wing Commander made the plaque presentations.

Both inductees were also presented at the AF/55th Birthday Ball the following evening.

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Lt Colonel (Ret) Michael (Spanky) W. McFarland was a consummate command pilot whose professionalism and "can do attitude" in the RC mission was superior. He accumulated over 14,000 flying hours, in numerous models of the -135, mostly in the RC.

After a tanker tour and brief civilian stint as an air traffic controller, Spanky spent 37 years directly supporting 55th Wing and the BIG SAFARI Systems Program



Office flight operations as pilot-in command, instructor and evaluator.

Following active duty, McFarland spent 24 years in Greenville, TX, flying all seven C-135 fleet programs. There, he played a key role in an extensive list of 55th/BIG SAFARI programs, projects, initiatives, and upgrades, including re-engining, analog to digital technology conversions, and cockpit upgrades; all of which made lasting impact to 55th Wing operations.

McFarland's aviator legacy rests in decades of significant innovations for 55th Wing assets.

Spanky has, during a distinguished career on active duty and continuing in the defense industry, made significant and lasting contributions to the 55th Wing, validating his induction into the 55th Wing Hall of Fame.

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In 27 years of USAF active-duty service, **CMSgt (Ret) Larry W. Meade** served 22 in the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*, including three overseas assignments to RAF Mildenhall, UK.



As an outstanding Airborne Maintenance Technician (AMT), he set the standard for ELINT maintenance support to the RC-135 fleet throughout numerous sensitive reconnaissance operations.

Chief Meade ended his 55th Wing service as Senior

Manager for 150 RIVET JOINT, COMBAT SENT, and ground mission systems personnel.

He followed his stellar Air Force career with nearly 20 years as a contractor aligned with all facets of the **Wing's** ELINT mission. Chief Meade served as Systems Configuration Manager, Supervisor and Site Manager ensuring upgrades of numerous RC-135 mission systems.

For the ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*** ELINT maintainers, the Chief has been a lifeline to RC-135 aircraft sustainment, depot support, and field-level activities.

In doing so, his **55th Wing** hallmark has been a "dedication to mission accomplishment", clearly earning his induction into the **55th Wing** Hall of Fame.

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18th EDITION

Past-president/Emcee Jim Thomas orchestrated this event. He made welcoming remarks to include reflecting upon the **Wing's** long history and heritage, the main purpose of the annual Tales.

The activities grow every year and are a must do for out of town visitors. **Col Sean Coveney**, UNO Professor of Air Science, brought about 30 UN-Omaha AFROTC cadets to witness this event.



Thomas began the tale-telling by referring to the **55th SRW** Cold War Monument at the Memorial Gardens of the National Museum of the Air Force near Dayton, OH.

He then told of the RB-47 shot down by a Soviet MiG on 1 July 1960. The last member of that crew, Bruce Olmstead, was laid to rest at Arlington in July, honored with the flyover of a **55th Wing** RC-135. (See related article earlier in this newsletter.)

Urschler related the details of the **55th SRW** EB-47E, Tell Two, projects conducted out of Incirlik AB, Turkey, which were to monitor Soviet missile launches in the 1950s through 1966. This is one of the lesser known chapters of **55th** history.

At the conclusion of his talk, he made the presentation on behalf of the **Association** of a painting of a Tell Two aircraft to the **55th Wing**, accepted by Colonel Manion.

Dubbed "Two at Four" (meaning a Tell Two at Detachment 4), the art work was done by a long time **55th** pilot in RB-47s at Forbes, the late **Gene Djiejowski**.

The painting was subsequently acquired by another Forbes RB veteran, **Lou Eisenberg**, who shipped it to Urschler.

The **Association** had the art reframed for the presentation.

(Ed. Note: The painting went to the **38th RS** where it is 'proudly displayed' to honor Cold Warriors of the ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth.***)

Next up, **LtCol Andrew Finkler**, commander of the **755th Operations Support Squadron** at Davis-Monthan, briefed on the significant missions of the **EC-135 COMPASS CALL** aircraft.



Those crews deliver essential elements of warfighting to front line commanders and units to ensure battlefield victories.

LtCol John Harrison, **343rd RS** commander, covered the exploits of a diverse RC crew, Python 72. Their superior deeds led to being awarded the **General Jerome O'Malley** Trophy at the Air Force

Association's annual convention in August; and also won the Palm Memorial Trophy as selected by the 55th Operations Group.

Once the speakers and other activities were concluded, Colonel Manion joined the speakers as Thomas closed the event with a toast to all the deployed troops of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*, a unit upon which "the sun never sets"



L-R: Thomas, Urschler, Harrison, Finkler, Manion

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55TH WING/AIR FORCE BALL 9 SEPTEMBER 2017

The 39th 55th Wing Birthday Ball was held on the subject date at the Omaha Century Link Center. Hosted by Colonel Michael Manion, 55th Wing Commander and his wife, Shannon.



Logo by Josh Plueger, 55th Wing Public Affairs

The Offutt TOP 3 Association (*Senior NCOs*) volunteered to take the lead to plan an event in just five months, other than the usual year's time frame, and to use its tax exempt ID number.

The decision was to 'merge' the Birthday Ball with an Air Force anniversary event.

The theme celebrated the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Air Force as a separate service. Also in the theme were: 100 years of Air Power and 150 years of Nebraska statehood.

The heritage of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* was covered in the program script and video.

The majority of the committee's volunteers were 55th personnel, but there was a wider representation across Offutt: US Strategic Command and the 557th Weather Wing, et al.

MSgt Miguel Saucedo, 55th Wing IG superintendent, headed the committee. It was a focused group. Their sense of purpose and urgency was admirable and thorough.



The stalwart committee members.

The stated goal was to set a Ball record for attendance (which was 970 in 2012); thus a standard ticket price for all attendees, regardless of rank or status, was \$20 per plate. The record was surpassed with 1030 persons enjoying the gala.

Fund raising, sponsors and many donors tried to make up the difference for the actual per plate charges (\$35). Although altruistic, the low per plate price still put them in the red.

It should be noted that there were many generous donors, and numerous attendees paid more than the \$20 per plate tag.

Historically, the Association has donated \$1000 every year since 2001 to the Birthday Ball. However, the Board of Directors decided to up the donation to \$2000 for this year only.



Association President Spivey, left, presents a facsimile check to Ball chairman MSgt 'Sauce' Saucedo, center. Association Treasurer Cook, right, gave the actual check, 24 August 2017.

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The ball program included the Hall of Fame inductees presentations, and the announcement of the awarding of the **55th Wing Association Award for Excellence**.



*The traditional cake cutting was done by the newest person assigned to the Wing, **Ann Dauna Anderson-Johnson**, 55th Security Forces Sqd, at left, Col Manion, center, and Brig Gen (Ret) Reg Urschler, founder of the Ball, and the senior representative.*

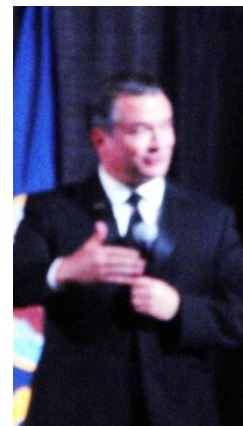
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(Ed. Note: the ceremonial saber was acquired and donated by the 55th Wing Association to the Wing at the 2004 Ball. and has been used at formal and official events ever since.)



Local TV personality, **Dave Webber**, was the emcee for his eighth year at the mike. He did his usual affable and professional job.

Congressman (BGen Retired) Don Bacon, a former **55th Wing** commander (March 2011-June 2012) was the guest speaker. It was his second stint as such, the first at the 2014 Ball, while he was still on active duty.



Association President Spivey announced the 2016 winner of the **55th Wing Association Award for Excellence**.

He was assisted by **Kurt Kramer**, who was the award's winner in 2002. *(See following article.)*

During the introduction, Spivey related the **Association's** purposes and its contributions to

the active wing.

The **Association** was recognized in the script and its members asked to stand; plus Colonel Manion also stated his appreciation for the organization's continued support in his closing remarks.

The newest Hall of Fame members were introduced and presented plaques by Colonel Manion. *(See previous article.)*

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As is usual for this major event, there were a plethora of dignitaries in attendance. In addition to Bacon and Urschler, other former wing commanders, Major General John Rauch, and his wife **Dianne**; Larry Mitchell and **Susan**; Steve Stevens and **Suzanne** attended.

Two former **55th Wing** command chief master sergeants, **Rich Casey**, wife **India**, and **Vicki Swingle** were there.

Besides the two newest members of the Hall of Fame, plus Urschler, Mitchell and Stevens, others attending were Hank Dubuy and Sandra, **James Taylor** and **Susan**, Michael Cook and **Tina**, Bill Ernst, Max Moore and **Carol**.

The **Association** was well represented by nine members of the Board of Directors, including the president, two past presidents, treasurer, and

secretary; plus about 100 **Association** members and guests.

Other dignitaries were: Congressman **Jeff Fortenberry** (R-NE, 1st) with one of his five daughters; State Senator **Bob Krist** (a 55th alum, **Association** member, and a past chairman of the 1996 Ball) and his wife, **Peg**; State Senator **Sue Crawford** and her husband; Sarpy Country Commissioner **Don Kelly** (another alum and a current Board member) and his wife **Melinda**, who is the 55th **Wing** commander's executive secretary;

Bellevue Mayor **Rita Sanders** and her co- 55th Wingmen **Kathy Williams** and **Frank Kumor**.

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Once the formal festivities were completed, the Heartland of America Band provided their usual superior performance for the crowd's dancing pleasure well into the evening.

Off came the mess dress jackets of many of the NCO attendees and party shirts abounded.

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The 2018 event is scheduled for Saturday, 22 September at the Century Link Center in Omaha.

The Offutt Top Three will still have the responsibility for planning the event 'going forward', under the lineage direction of the 55th **Wing** Command Chief and 55th **Wing** Commander.

Although the references are to the Air Force Ball, this arrangement seems to assure a major 55th presence. Stay tuned, boys and girls.

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Please note that 55th Wing Protocol office personnel periodically reviews and culls its DV invitation list to reduce mailing costs, and to delete repeat offenders who do not RVSP, even with regrets, and there are many.

Thus, if you have received invitations to the Ball, and/or other events in the past, it may not have occurred in the recent months/years, nor in the future.

But, not to worry. The word will always be spread by networking, and anyone can sign up to go to the Ball via 'executive action' as has been done in recent years whether you get a formal invitation or not.

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In today's climate of funding crunches, the world needs to know the following fact (*it isn't new info, and has always been so*): **The 55th Wing Birthday Balls past, and this year's Ball, pay for themselves.**

NO taxpayer dollars finance these events. They are paid for with 'ticket' sales, fundraising, sponsors, and donors.

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55TH WING ASSOCIATION AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

SSgt Nathan T. Beazley is the award winner for 2016. As an EC-130H Instructor Mission Crew Supervisor with the 55th Electronic Combat Group's (ECG), 42nd Electronic Combat Squadron (ECS), SSgt Beazley consistently performed his technical and leadership duties in a superior manner.

In 2016, he flew 14 combat sorties with 40 anti-ISIS strike missions, which provided 70 tip-offs leading to 120 enemy killed-in-action.

In combat operations, SSgt Beazley primed 26 airstrike requests, shielded coalition aircraft and forces with 72 hours of electronic attack while destroying 68 targets.

He was recognized twice as a quarterly award winner, became an Airman Leadership School (ALS) Distinguished Graduate, and earned ALS Academic Achievement honors.

SSgt Nathan Beazley's "Above and Beyond" service clearly demonstrates the very best of ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*** success.

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SSgt Beasley was unable to attend the Ball, so through a series of hand-offs (*wing commander, squadron commander, group commander*), the award was eventually presented to him at the ECG's awards ceremony at Davis-Monthan on 18 October.

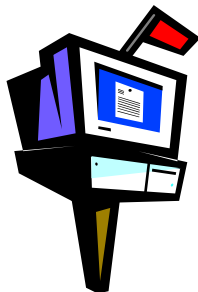




Colonel Phil Acquaro, 55th ECG/CC, SSgt Beazley, center, CMSgt Becka Guthrie, 41st ECSqd Superintendent

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MAIL 'N STUFF



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Max:

I just received the July 2017 *Videmus Omnia*, and as usual, I had to read it through and through immediately.

I'm reminded that **Gordon Storm's** name is never far from my thoughts and memory. Gordon was a Nebraska native (some place in west Nebraska, Scottsbluff or Mitchell).

He actually flew Navy PBYS in WWII, went to the Univ. of Nebraska, no doubt on the GI Bill, joined AFROTC, I believe. Got his second lieutenant commission just in time for Korea.

Eventually, he got to Keesler AFB, Biloxi, MS, in late 1950 for ECM training. That's where I met him and spent the next couple years studying, flying and drinking with him.

We also had 343rd SRS characters **Phil Halbman, Alfred Beacom, Charlie Rawson, Charlie Givens, Marvin G. "Hoss" Walker, Charlie Ward, Dave Holdsworth**, Flt. Engineer **MSgt. Ford**; some great gunners, and others; as we went through combat training at Ramey AFB, PR;

actual combat in Korea, and (*operational*) all along the Soviet coast, Siberia, China, etc., 1950 - 1953.

If (*one could*) look at our crew records, we probably had more Air Medals than any other 16 man crew ever, between WWII, Korea and Vietnam.

We had our lucky RB-50 (tail #7147) and missed being shot down around Vladivostok. But our relief crew, **Stan O'Kelley's**, was not as lucky.

Some of us left active service in 1953, having done our bit in the Korean War, but Gordon stayed in for a long career, a lot of it in the **55th**.

He flew many ECM missions in RB-47's, after the RB-50's were phased out.

His son, **Gary Storm** went through the US Naval Academy at Annapolis and eventually became captain of the *USS Ticonderoga*, the first guided middle cruiser.

What a thrill it was to visit the 'Tico' in Norfolk, along with Gordon and **Mary Jane**, when the **55th** had a reunion at Langley-Norfolk (Hampton, VA) in the early 1990's. I'll always remember "Attention on deck!!" spoken clearly by crew members as Captain Storm and his parents walked though the ship.

Maybe the **55th Wing** Historian can dig up Gordon's records. Long-time **55ther Harry Tull** would remember, if he were still around.

Daniel L. Martin, Esq, Glen Ridge, NJ

(Edited from an e-mail 17 July 2017)

(Ed. Note: Even though **Dan** left the **55th** and the Air Force in 1953 and became a career lawyer, he has 'atoned' for that by being a long time, sustaining member of the **Association**. Hoo-rah!!)

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Max:

I received the **Fighting 55th** newsletters and directory.

I appreciate the updates. Great articles.

Still have a hard time getting through TAPS.

Tom Keck, Tucson, AZ (Former wing commander, May 1993 - May 1995)

(E-mail 23 July 2017)

* * * * *

Dear **Association** Members:

I am writing to let you know that my mother, **Mary Foreman**, died sometime ago.

She was a remarkable woman who lived her life in the service of others.

She looked forward to receiving your newsletter and valued her membership in your organization. (Mary's husband **Lewis** passed in October 2000.)

Sincerely, **Kim Harvin**, Sumter, SC
(From a note sent 24 July 2017.)

* * * * *

Dear Max,

What a wonderful surprise it was to see the lovely wreath from the **55th** at Bruce's graveside at Arlington! It was a memorable tribute to him and I want to thank everyone who was a part of it.



I never realized how widespread his reputation was until the outpouring of appreciation that I experienced at his burial. I treasure the fact that the **55th** has kept Bruce's spirit alive through the years, and will continue to do so in the future.

Will you please thank everyone who was involved for me?

With fondness and gratitude,

Gail (Olmstead), Annapolis, MD

(She also added that the RC flyover was indeed impressive!) (From an e-mail 8 August 2017)

* * * * *

Max,

The funeral for our Cold War warrior was attended by over 100 persons, many former **55th** members, RB-47H/RC-135 types, some active duty members stationed in the Washington area. I know you would have been there if you could.

It was great to see Reggie again as well as Hank Dubuy. In spite of the numbers attending, the Arlington cemetery staff did an outstanding job and the Air Force chaplain gave a fitting eulogy on Bruce and his life.

The fly-by of an RC-135 was a great final touch to honor one of America's selfless and dedicated Cold War warriors. I will send you pictures to put into the next newsletter.

Best, **Wolf Samuel**, Fairfax Station, VA.

(From an e-mail 27 July 2017)



L-R: Urschler, Tom Shepherd, Samuel, Dubuy.

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NEWSLETTER INPUTS WELCOME

Yes, we are aware that these newsletters tend to be Offutt-centric. Here is how members can help diversify the coverage in Videmus Omnia:

Editor's usual plea: If anyone wishes to contribute letters, true (humorous or otherwise) stories, photos and articles, please do so.

Send them to MaxMoore55@aol.com, preferably; or mail to the address in the Directory on page 2. We encourage and welcome any input.

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When 55th events occur in your area (Florida, Texas, MD/VA/DC metroplexes, Denver/CSprings, California, wherever), gatherings great or small, that you think would be of interest to the general readership, mail or e-mail the pertinent details, and include the names of those who arrange and attend.

Names are news. Use 'em. Pictures are good. Send 'em.

The only way to broaden our coverage is to get input from throughout Fifty-Fifth-land.

Letters, articles, and some of following items are examples.

(Contributions may be,..... well, of course, they will be, edited for content, readability, and spacing. It is what I do.)

Thanks, and Videmus Omnia, Max.



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55th SQUADRONS CELEBRATED 100 YEAR ANNIVERSARIES

Four *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* squadrons marked centennials this year. All have roots dating to WW1 in 1917, and continue to contribute to the nation's national defense in present day.

The 41st Electronic Combat Sqd, under the 55th Electronic Combat Group (ECG) at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, traces to Company A, 4th Balloon Sqd in November 1917. It was during WWII that the 41st designation was first used.

Also currently in the 55th ECG, the 43rd Electronic Combat Sqd history began as the 86th Aero Sqd, August 1917, and was under **BGen Billy Mitchell** in the final battle of WW1 in Measue-Argonne, France.

The 95th Reconnaissance Sqd, now at RAF Mildenhall, UK, as part of the 55th Operations Group (OG), originated as the 95th Aero Sqd in August 1917. The unit flew bi-planes in the first air combat battles of WW1.

Now at Offutt in the 55th Ops Group, the 97th Intelligence Sqd goes back to August 1917 as the 97th Aero Sqd at Kelly Field, TX. Today it is one of the largest squadrons in the USAF and its mission is to project worldwide intelligence and reconnaissance to warfighters and national leadership.

All the units planned a variety of events to celebrate the anniversaries: dining-ins, dinners, BBQs, sport runs, etc.

(Information for this article gleaned from 55th Wing Public Affairs, the 55th Wing Historian and squadron reps.)



55th WING RECEIVES ACC MERITORIOUS UNIT AWARD

Air Combat Command (ACC) recently announced that the 55th Wing as one of its Meritorious Unit Award (MUA) recipients for 2017. The 55th Wing was one of six wings to earn the award from the command. The MUA recognizes organizations for outstanding achievement or service in direct support of combat operations.

“Every member of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* should wear this ribbon with pride,” said Col Michael Manion, 55th Wing commander. “They have certainly earned it.”

During the period of June 1, 2016 to May 31, 2017, the Wing executed 31 deployments using four different aircraft to support five different combatant commands. This included the first RC-135V/W Rivet Joint deployment to Northern Command in more than 25 years.

“Our wing has been deployed continuously to Southwest Asia for more than 27 years, but we're constantly being called upon and answering other commands' requests for our unique skill set around the world, as well,” Manion said.

The 55th Wing's Compass Call EC-130H were the highest utilized C-130s in the Air Force's inventory and personnel during this period. Its communications experts, which are unique in ACC, used its inventory to support the President of the United States and eight different combatant commands, among others.



“I'm honored to have the great fortune to lead this group of Airmen,” Manion said. “The members of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* are truly making history on a daily basis.”

This is the eleventh time the Wing has earned the award, the most recent was in 2015.

(Article and graphic by 55th Wing Public Affairs, September 2017. Edited by Moore.)



Members/readers may notice the repetition of the names of two prominent persons in this issue.

*Thus, it might be dubbed
“The Bacon and Gravy Gazette.”*

EAST COAST “CHAPTER”

East coast area alumni, including active duty, retirees, Pentagon habitués, and ‘beltway bandits’, have occasional social gatherings. Events are organized periodically for reconnecting, exchanging information, and camaraderie in the 55th spirit.

A potential winter holiday party may occur if someone is willing to host and offer their home, I am sure a gathering can be pulled together. Just need a recce warrior to step up to the plate and volunteer, and the details will be worked out, coordinated and distributed for maximum participation.

For information on current and future **55th Wing Association East** events, or to get on the e-mail listing, phone Ricky McMahon’s cell: 571-643-2602, or e-mail at potomacpistol@gmail.com, or Ricky.McMahon@L3T.com. His cohort is Trish Seinwill, pseinwill@yahoo.com. Pass your contact information to either of them.

In addition, if you know of any former **Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth’er** in the National Capitol Region that is **not currently** receiving **55th Wing Association** information, let Ricky or Trish know, or provide contact information for that individual and one of them will make sure they get an **Association** membership form and the information they need to become connected.

(From e-mails by Ricky Mac, Sept/Oct 2017)

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SAN ANTONIO LUNCH BUNCH

This alumni ‘chapter’ is still active. As **Charlie McBride** and **Dave Frutchey** report, they gather the **second** Thursday each month, 1200 hours, at the **Lion and Rose Pub**, Blanco and Loop 410.

Initially, five veteran crewdogs began the group a few years ago. Typically, 9-12 attend each monthly gathering. It is a time of reliving the past and just enjoying one another's company.

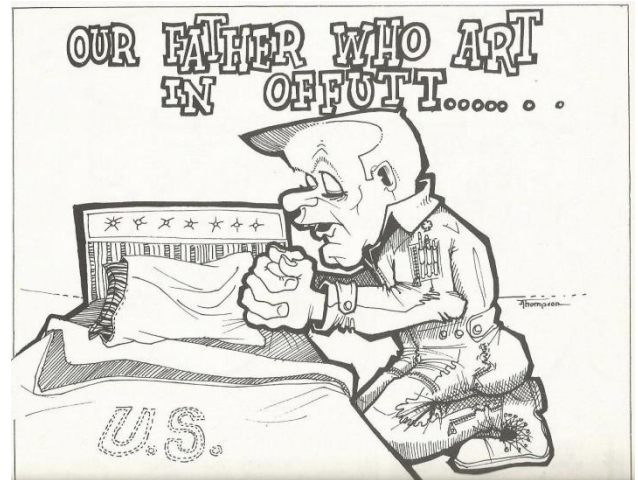
To join this convivial group, contact McBride at cmcbride40@yahoo.com, or Frutchey at dfrutchey@att.net. Better yet, just show up.

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If there are any new 55th ‘chapters’ (big, small, in-between) forming out there,

please let it be known so the word can spread. California, Florida, Colorado, and other parts of Texas (to list just a few) all have pockets of alums where such activity may occur.

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Cartoon courtesy of Jerry Thompson, a former SAC bomber pilot and famed SAC cartoonist.

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EC-135 RESTORATION UPDATE

Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum is more than half-way through a two-year, \$200,000 project, EC-135C Aircraft 38049. Fund raising has stalled at about \$90,000. There has been little to no help from corporations.

You can send a donation to: SAC AEROSPACE MUSEUM, Attn: Development, c/o EC-135, 2821 West Park Hwy, Ashland, NE, 68003; or on line at: SACMuseum.org/donate, and state it is for the EC restoration. They need all the assistance they can get.

The ultimate goal is to restore the plane internally to the way it was when the last *Looking Glass* mission was flown in 1990. Sometime in 2018 it will be displayed (*without wings and engines*) in the main museum viewing area.

At right, **Ryan Sandell** works in the boom pod.





Outside the aircraft, the volunteers continue to prepare the frame and skin of the aircraft for priming and painting.

Inside the aircraft, the volunteers are restoring equipment which can be reinstalled before the insulation is hung. The insulation has been ordered. After the insulation is installed, other equipment that has already been restored will be reinstalled.

Don Skaw is wiring the aircraft with 110 power that will be used to power the various exhibits when the aircraft goes on display.

This is a long and arduous project requiring dedication, and a lot of time and elbow grease. Many volunteers have put in over 15,500 hours of work thus far.

Other dedicated restoration workers include: **Bob Sidal, Dick Doolittle, Don Peterson, Chuck Karrick, Steve Stevens, Bruce Jones, Charlie Tweedie, Dennis Kathman, and Doug Spurlock**, among others.

Anyone wishing to volunteer work time and expertise can do so by contacting the Museum's web-site, sacmuseum.org.

If you flew on the EC-135s, or significantly contributed to EC-135 missions and are visiting the SAC Museum, be sure to ask a restoration volunteer to escort you into the Restoration Hanger for a closer look. Safety is always paramount and all visitors should be escorted. But, safety permitting, the volunteers welcome the chance to show former crewmembers how they are restoring your aircraft.

Progress on the restoration can be monitored in pictures posted to the following Facebook sites: SAC ACC (Strategic Air Command – Airborne Command and Control), 4th ACCS PACCS, LOOKING GLASS (SAC ABNCP) AND PACCS, FANS OF STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND, and SAC VETERANS

*(Updated material and photos provided by **Hank Carriger**, Bellevue, NE, Volunteer Coordinator, from a series of e-mails October 2017.)*



TAPS



AH SAM, Reynette L., 54, 16 September 2017, Bellevue, NE; wife of **Ralph**, a former COBRA BALL/ COMBAT SENT raven in the 24th/45th and 343rd SRS at Offutt AFB, NE, circa late 1990s-early 2000s. Now works with his own company.

BABER, James, 80, 7 September 2017, Papillion, NE; Pilot in RC-135s, 82nd Strategic Recon Sqd (SRS) at Kadena AB, Okinawa, and **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW)** at Offutt AFB, NE, in the late 1960s-1970s,.

GARRITY, Thomas J., 79, 2 September 2017, Bellevue, NE; wife and best friend of 57 years, **Francine**. Tom was an RC EWO and staff officer in the **55th** at Offutt circa 1970s and 1980s. He also had a staff tour at Hellenicon, Athens, Greece. After his 28 year Air Force career, he retired in 1988, he had a GS position in **55th** Plans for 15 years before retiring a second time.

GILLER, Edward, B., 99, 1 October 2017, Albuquerque, NM. An Illinois native who entered the military before WWII and became a pilot in April 1942. Ed was in the first cadre of the **55th** Pursuit Group in P-38 fighters. He had fascinating careers in the military and after. A true member of the Greatest Generation. *(See article following.)*

GRIFFIN, Donald M., 91, 27 July 2017, Wilton CA; married to **Marsha** for 22 years. Don graduated from aviation cadets as a pilot in 1945. His time with the **55th** was as an AC in RB-47s at Forbes AFB, KS, and later in RC/EC-135s at Offutt from 1959-1970. *(See article following.)*

HEANY, Dorothy Rita, 94, 25 October 2016, Goffstown, NH; widow of **John**. *(Only information known.)*

HICKS, David L., 75, 11 August 2017, Alta Loma, CA; wife of 54 years, **Charlene**. A native of Tennessee he was a tanker navigator at Lockbourne AFB, OH, before getting into RC-135s at Eielson AFB, AK, and Offutt. He also was in the SAC

Recon Center. After retiring from the AF, he spent 20 years with Lockheed Martin in Ontario, CA.

MILLER, James, 76, 12 July 2017, Ralston, NE. Jim was an EWO in the 343rd at Offutt from late 1970s to early 1980s. He was the operations officer before moving into the first cadre setting up the 338th Combat Crew Training Sqd in March 1984. He taught elementary school for several years after retiring from the Air Force.

PIKE, Jan, 6 September 2017, Pacific Junction, IA; widow of **Ray**, RC navigator and staff officer at Kadena, late 1960s. (*Only information known.*)

RUSSELL, Duveen, 80, 22 July 2017, Albany, TX. She was married to **Bobby** for 60 years. He was an EWO in RBs at Forbes, RC-135s at Kadena, She was active in her church, and local civic organizations, and an avid book reader

SADELL, Bonnie Lee, 84, 9 February 2017, Tucson, AZ; widow of **Norman** who passed in 2012. They were married 64 years. He was a KC-97 pilot in the **55th ARS** at Forbes 1958-1962. Bonnie had Bachelor's and Master's degrees in music, and she played violin in the Arizona State University and Tucson symphony orchestras for many years.

WHITLOCK, Dorothy (Dee), 17 October 2017, Norfolk, VA; wife of **Neil**. He was a bomb/nav equipment technician in the **55th** at Forbes for many years, mid- to late 1950s. They attended several reunions.

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TAPS notification of **Association** members, spouses, friends and associates should be sent to Editor Max Moore, 201 Basswood Court, Bellevue NE, 68005; or e-mail MaxMoore55@aol.com.

The information is relayed to the **Association** president and the web master.

Please include next of kin and an address to whom an Association condolence message may be sent by the President.

The date of demise, age, location; and if known, connection to the 55th - base, time frame and Air Force specialty will be helpful.

Please note that the news in TAPS is determined and limited by how much and how accurate the given source information.

Otherwise, I just have to make up stuff.



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DONALD M. GRIFFIN, COLONEL, USAF, RETIRED-RECON ICON

Grif was born in Kirk, CO, on 6 October 1925, but was raised in Rooks County, KS, during the dust bowl days. He graduated from Natoma (KS) High School in 1943 and enlisted in the US Army. He was selected for Aviation Cadet Pilot Training, earning his wings in September 1945 at Luke Field, AZ.

He was subsequently discharged in 1946 due to demobilization after the end of WWII, but he remained in the Army Air Corps Active Reserve in B-26s. He also became a commercial flight instructor until being recalled to active duty in May 1953 at Lowry AFB, CO, serving as a line pilot and instructor in RB-25 and RC-47 aircraft.



After serving in Korea and Japan, he trained at McConnell AFB, KS, in B-47s, and was then assigned to the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW)** at Forbes AFB, KS in April 1959.

Grif flew RB-47s and rapidly was a crew commander, then IP, and assigned to a select crew in Stan/Eval, thus he began a long and illustrious association with the ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*** and SAC recon, flying operational global missions of vital Cold War significance.

As the **Wing** prepared to move to Offutt and acquire RC-135C aircraft, Grif trained at Castle AFB, CA, in KC-135s before returning to the **55th** at Offutt in 1966. Once again he was an IP and in Stand/Eval as chief of the recon branch, flying RC/EC/KC aircraft He later served as the Director of Training (DOT).

His move onward and upward was in October 1970 as commander, Det. 1, 6th SRW at Shemya Air Force Station, AK. A year later he was back at Offutt as commander of the **55th Field Maintenance Sqd**, then led the 2 ACCS. Next, he was the Assistant Director of Operations and then became the DO.

In December 1973 Grif returned to Alaska at Eielson AFB as the vice commander, then commander of the 6th SRW. Following that he served as commander, of the 98th Strat Wing (SAC) at Torrejon AB, Spain; then stood up and commanded Det. 2, 306th Strategic Wing at Zaragoza AB, Spain, from September 1976 thru September 1979.

His final assignment was as 12th Air Division Executive Officer at Dyess AFB, TX. The 55th was under that division at the time. Colonel Griffin retired in July 1981 after 38 years of military service and more than 10,000 flying hours.

Don Griffin was well known as an outstanding role model, mentor and leader in every position he served during his extensive, varied and distinguished career.

His connection with the **55th Wing Association** was long and continued. He attended many reunions and served on the Board of Directors from 1996 until his passing. He proposed and established the organization's first iteration of its web site in 1996 and maintained it until 2001.

An affable, genial gentleman, Grif will be missed by any and all who knew him

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MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD B. GILLER, USAF RETIRED

Ed was born in Jacksonville, IL, in 1918. He graduated from Kemper Military School (MO), and from the University of Illinois with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering in 1940. After graduation he worked in Houston, TX, for the Sinclair Oil Refining Company as a chemical engineer.



In September 1941 he entered military duty and earned his pilot wings and commission as a second lieutenant in April 1942 at Lubbock Field, TX.

During World War II, he served in the European Theater of Operations with the **55th Fighter Group** in the Eighth Air Force, became commander of the 343d Fighter Squadron,

and later was Deputy Commander of the **55th Group**.

He participated in the air offensive campaigns of Europe; Normandy; Northern France Rhineland; Ardennes-Alsace; and Central Europe.

As a fighter pilot, he completed 115 aerial combat missions, accumulated 465 combat hours in P-38 and P-51 aircraft, and is credited with three enemy aircraft destroyed, including an Me-262 jet fighter in April 1945.

He was wounded in a later mission that took him out of the remainder of the war.

After WW II, General Giller again attended the University of Illinois under the AFIT Program, earning a Master of Science degree in chemical engineering in 1948, and his doctorate degree in chemical engineering in 1950.

From March 1950 to May 1954, he was an executive, Weapons Effects Division, and chief, Radar Branch, Armed Forces Special Weapons Project, Washington, DC, previously known as the Manhattan Project (*which had produced the atomic bomb.*)

After that, he went on to various AF research and development nuclear weapons programs rising to the rank of major general in 1968. His last position was Assistant General Manager for Military Application, Atomic Energy Commission, Germantown, MD. He retired in 1972 to Albuquerque, NM.

His military decorations and awards include the Silver Star, Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster (OLC), Distinguished Flying Cross with OLC, Air Medal with 17 OLCs, Purple Heart, and the Croix de Guerre (France).

MGen Giller attended the **55th Wing** Birthday Ball for many years from its inception in January 1979, and at least thru 2002; usually wearing his WWII leather jacket, dashing white scarf, and fleece lined flight boots.

This photo is from 1981.

He was the guest speaker in January 1986, was often the senior cake cutter; and twice spoke at *Tales* events.

MGen Giller was in the original group of *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* Heroes and Legends in 1999.



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TAPS ON THE ASSN WEB SITE

The **TAPS** section has an alphabetical, as well as chronological, listing for easier access to the names and dates of those in the **55th** family who have passed.

Anyone who wishes to have the name of a family member, friend, or comrade who was a former member of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* added to the listing can request the web-guy to do so.

Please have the date of demise (*at least the year*) for placement.

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MEMORIAL BRICK ORDERS STILL CAN DO

There still may be some **55th** veterans and/or family members, friends, associates, who want to order bricks for the **55th SRW** Cold War Memorial patio in the National Museum of the USAF Memorial Gardens.

Orders have slowed considerably, but anyone interested in doing so should contact **Bill Ernst** for details: BillErnst1@cox.net, or phone 402-292-1205.

There are currently 602 dedicated bricks in the patio with about 100 available for new orders. Since 2003 about 50 new bricks have been added. Some years a few new bricks are added, some years, none.

Any new brick orders can still be sent to Ernst anytime, but no later than **30 June 2018**, to allow time for processing, engraving, and installing by the end of summer 2018.

During the summers of 2016 and 2017, approximately 20 original bricks, showing wear or loss of letter coloring, were replaced each year at the expense of the **Association**. It is anticipated that another 20 will need replacing in 2018. (*Most of these bricks are 14 years old.*)

(*Input provided by **Jack Kovacs**, our man in Fairborn, OH.*)

Interestingly, the Museum **no longer allows** bricks as part of memorials currently being installed in the Memorial Gardens, upkeep and maintenance being the problem.

Other monument patios do not have diligent on-site caretakers such as we have in Kovacs and **Larry LaFlair**, and several of them are in varying degrees of disrepair.

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FIGHTIN' FIFTY-FIFTH HISTORY – WING TRANSITIONS FROM PURSUIT TO RECON 55th Wing Public Affairs

After making its mark during World War II, earning two Distinguished Unit Citations, and producing 16 aces, the **55th Fighter Group** flew its last mission on April 21, 1945, and was deactivated August 20, 1946.

However, by 1947 The Soviet Union had emerged as a real threat and the United States found itself in the middle of a

Cold War. To counter this, the unit was reactivated as the **55th Reconnaissance Group** at MacDill Field, FL.

As part of the newly established Strategic Air Command, the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* operated a special variation of the venerable B-17 to complete its mission of aerial photography, mapping, charting and photo reconnaissance.

In June 1948, the **55th** transferred operations to Topeka Field, KS, as the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Group**. Under the command of **Colonel Alfred Kalberer** (*the only man to command the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* twice, 1948 and 1952*), the recon unit conducted long range 'mapping' missions of the Soviet Union's air defense systems, a previously unknown and uncharted threat. During this period, the group also documented the Operation Sandstone atomic tests in 1948.

In October 1949, the **55th** was once again deactivated. But when another Cold War threat emerged over Korea, the unit was reactivated as the **55th Special Reconnaissance Wing** (Medium) at Barksdale Air Force Base, LA, on November 1, 1950.





Eventually, the group moved to Ramey Air Force Base, Puerto Rico, and was designated as the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW)** before returning to Topeka in 1952 at (then) Forbes AFB.

As the Cold War continued to heat up, so did the **55th SRW's** missions. On July 29, 1953, an RB-50G assigned to the unit and deployed to Yokota Air Base, Japan, was shot down by two Russian MiG-17s near the Siberian coast. Just one crew member, copilot **John Roche**, survived, but the fourteen others became the first Cold War hostile fire casualties in *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* history.



RB-50G

In 1954 under SAC, the unit completed its transition to RB-47Hs, used for strategic ELINT/SIGNIT reconnaissance missions of hostile communist nations.

On July 1, 1960, international headlines were made when a **55th SRW** RB-47H crew, flying its first operational mission out of RAF Brize-Norton, UK, was shot down by a Soviet jet fighter in international air space over the Barents Sea north of Murmansk.

Copilot Captain **Bruce Olmstead** and navigator Captain **John McKone** ejected and survived in their life rafts for more than six hours, when they were picked up by a Soviet fishing vessel.

Aircraft commander, **Major Willard Palm**, was recovered in his life raft having died of hyperthermia. The raven team, Captains **Oscar Goforth**, **Dean Phillips** and **Eugene Posa**, were not recovered.

The US Air Force, unaware that the plane had been shot down (*the Soviet Union did not release this information for more than a week*) conducted a search for the missing plane and crew from July 2-7, but no trace was found.

After their rescue by a Russian trawler crew, McKone and Olmstead were sent to Moscow's infamous Lubyanka Prison and were intensely interrogated for weeks, which they successfully resisted.

After seven months as prisoners, they were released on January 25, 1961, as a gesture to newly inaugurated **President John F. Kennedy**. Their story became national news with the TIME Magazine cover story in its February 2, 1961 issue.



The *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* remained a key unit in the Cold War during the 1960s, and was also heavily involved in the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

On January 26, 1965, the **55th SRW**, Detachment One, stood up at Offutt Air Force Base, NE, and nineteen months later, August 16, 1966, the **Wing** headquarters officially moved from Forbes to Offutt where it remains today.

(Basic article 29 March 2017, with edits, added material, shields and photos by Moore)



FLAGS FLOWN OVER THE AIR FORCE MEMORIAL PROCEDURES CHANGED

As of 1 April 2017, the responsibility for daily operations of the Air Force Memorial transitioned from the Air Force Association to the United States Air Force.

This is the word last June from the Memorial staff:

“We are currently in the process of developing the flag-flying program under the Air Force.



For now, we require that a flag be sent to us, along with a return mailing envelope, or prepaid postage. Our address is 1 Air Force Memorial Dr, Arlington, VA, 22204; ATTN: Outreach Coordinator.”

“Once we have a program fully developed, a form will be available online at our new website, <http://www.afdw.af.mil/afmemorial/>. Please feel free to put afmemorial@mail.mil as the point of contact (POC) for any inquiries.”

Zachary H. Steele, GS-12, DAF
Events & Outreach Coordinator for the
Air Force Memorial

(Ed. Note: Multiple attempts were made to get a more recent update on this info without response. So, go with it for now.)

For inquiries on hosting events, visiting, or for general information about the Memorial please contact the AFM Staff at 703-462-4093, or via e-mail at afmemorial@mail.mil. You can learn more at the Air Force Memorial website.

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REUNIONS

* * * * *

OMAHA/OFFUTT AREA POPULAR FOR REUNIONS IN SEPTEMBER 2018

It is noteworthy that all three chairmen of these reunions are members of the 55th Wing Association.

* * * * *

BIG SAFARI ASSOCIATION

This one is planned for 7-9 September 2018

Reunion chair, **Bill Ernst**, has Embassy Suites in downtown Omaha near the Old Market as HQ.

Details are in the works and TBD with updated info in future newsletters and on the organization’s web site.

Bill’s contact e-address is bill.ernst1@cox.net.



* * * * *

SAC ACCA REUNION

Scheduled for 12 though 16 September 2018.

Reunion headquarters will be Courtyard Marriott/Beardmore Convention Center in Bellevue, NE. Reservations can be made by calling 888-236-2427 and asking for the Airborne Command and Control Association blocked rooms.

Dick Doolittle is the reunion chairman. He reports over 100 potential attendees already. His e-address is rnd31@cox.net.

Registration, agenda and more details will be forthcoming in future newsletters and on the ACCA web site.

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B-47 STRATOJET ASSOCIATION

Slated from 18 to 21 September 2018,

reunion headquarters will be at the Magnolia Hotel, 615 Howard Street in downtown Omaha, just around the corner from the Orpheum Theater.

Dick Purdum leads this gathering; dickpurdum@cox.net.

Details TBD in future newsletters and on the organization’s web site.



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ASSOCIATION BX

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ASSOCIATION POLO SHIRTS/CAPS

These are ‘must have’ items for reunion events; plus, they look good on the golf course, for casual Fridays at the office, and any leisure activity.



Photos by Sergeant.

All the items can be viewed in color on the **Association** web site at www.55wa.org, and click on the BX, Clothing Sales links.

Great gifts! The shirts and caps are **unisex**, so get one for your spouse, significant other, or other family members, the family pet even.

Give a big hint to the family, and mayhap some generous loved one will give you a gift for whatever you have going: Father's Day, birthday, anniversary, Christmas, Hanukkah, Ramadan, Kwanzaa, Chinese New Year, or just because you are you.

Now available in a variety of colors, the design is 100% polyester micro-pique, moisture-wicking and anti-microbial control; available in sizes medium, large, XL, and XXL. Size 3XL can be ordered if requested, Big Guy.

The cost is \$35 each.

Be sure to state which size and color you want in your order.

* * * * *

The golf/baseball caps are royal blue or tan with the dual shield logo on the front, and an adjustable back strap.

They go for \$12 each.

* * * * *



There are charges for priority postage to be added to the individual item cost: \$5.45 for one cap; \$10.45 for one shirt; \$11.35 for both a shirt and cap order; \$11.35 for two shirts.

More ways to identify with your **Association** and "show the logo" as appropriate for reunions, official, social and casual functions.

* * * * *

THE ASSOCIATION TIE

The **Association's** 'regimental' tie is a distinguished blue and red striped design with the **Association's** dual shield logo prominently displayed in the tie's center. A fine gold line defines every fourth blue/red stripe.

The price is \$25 per tie, including shipping and postage. Order now!

This item is another great gift item, and a 'must have' for **Association** reunion banquets and other appropriate events.

*(The tie was the brain child and creation of the late **Sam Pizzo**, the first elected president of the **Association**, an original and long time member of the Board of Directors.)*

* * * * *

Anyone desiring to purchase any of the advertised items should contact the haberdasher, **William (Bill) Sargent** at 2711 Northwood Circle, Papillion, NE, 68133 or William488@cox.net

Checks for the full amount of your order should be made to the 55th Wing Association, and Bill will promptly respond to your order.

* * * * *

CHANGES COMING

Soon we will have a web site set up that will allow members to order different colored polo shirts, caps, and other items with the **Association** logo. For those who don't have a computer available, you will still be able to order through the **US Postal Service!** (thru me)

More to followstay tuned. Bill Sargent

* * * * *

55TH FASHION PINS

The pins continue to be sold to **Association** members all over the country. They are particularly evident at 55th reunions, the Ball, and at official and social functions at and near Offutt.

You will want to acquire one for that special lady in your life to wear on any occasion.

Gents, it makes a great birthday or anniversary accessory gift, or holiday stocking stuffer. (Shown actual size)



Classy, but inexpensive.

The **Association** does **not** sell these pins and receives **no** money from the sales. But, as a service for those who wish to possess same: **Erwin's Jewelers, Frank Kumor**, proprietor, offers them and **you can purchase directly from the store.**

Send order requests to 223 W. Mission Ave, Bellevue, NE; or call: (402) 291-2454, or fax to (402) 293-5873 to order the pins. **Costs are \$9 for the pin and \$4 for shipping.**

Frank is an **Association** member and ardent supporter. He is also one of the **55th** Commander's Wingmen, allowed to wear the coveted leather flight jacket awarded for superior and continued community support to the **55th Wing.**

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DIRECTORY JULY 2017 ERRATA

NEW or RENEWED MEMBERS TO ADD TO DIRECTORY

COOPER, John and Sharry
1808 S. 193rd Street
Omaha, NE 68130
(402) 598-1681
Jcoop338@gmail.com

ELDRIDGE, Golda T, Jr (Tom) & Stacy
PO Box 323
Bennet, NE 68317
(817) 739-1825
golda@sgeldridge.com

GATES, Ned & Ruby
9202 Mt Haven
San Antonio, TX 78250
(210) 681-8616
nedgates@hotmail.com

WHO SHOT WHAT

Graphics from various sources, Clip art, and web sites. Pictures **not** previously attributed: Grif from his bio on the **Association** web site; Giller's official AF photo, and Ball shot from archives. AF Memorial from the Air Force web site.

All others: SPY V, Preisman, Hall, Tales, Ball related; Palm crew portrait by Moore.

Association tie by Pizzo; **55th** pin by Moore; 'Mad Max' graphic by **Patricia Gros**, friend of the **Association.**

* * * * *

If you cannot answer a person's argument with logic, you can still call them nasty names.

*We have enough 'youth'.
How about a fountain of 'smart'?*

(Yes, these are called 'fillers'.)

* * * * *

GUILLOT, Gregory & L
205 8th Street
Honolulu, HI 96816
(520) 243-0976
Greg.guillot@hotmail.com

HALL, Ryan & Jean
9142 Kathi Creek Dr.
Colorado Springs, CO 80924
(850) 461-1906
Ryanhall826@gmail.com

JOHNSON, Jeffery & Kim
12010 S. 219th Ave.
Gretna, NE, 68028
(402) 515-8228
jeff_johnson1@outlook.com

KECK, Thomas & Karen
4387 N. Sabino Mountain Dr
Tucson, AZ 85750
Tkeck69@aol.com
(520) 760-5077

LARSEN, Eric
386 Morris Lane
Greenville, TX 75402
Tel, E-mail not known

MCCLURKIN, Regan
6548 Elderberry Court
Elkridge, MD 21075-6485
(937) 831-1040
mcclurkr@hotmail.com

PIETRUSZKA, Steve
6644 Rockland Drive
Clifton, VA 20124=2501

ROEBUCK, Craig & Amy
13 Richardson Ave
Otter Creek, ME 04660
(207) 266-8147
icepilot139@hotmail.com

SINISCALCHI, Joe & Kim
5574 Canada Court
Rockwall, TX 75032
JW.Siniscalchi@gmail.com

TAYLOR, Steve & Janet
12028 Underwood Court
Bristow, VA 20136
(703) 396-8570
swtaylor52@hotmail.com

TODD, Kevin & Janice
8441 S. 64th St.
Omaha, NE, 68157
(303) 717-5231
guyn5gals@gmail.com

RELOCATIONS/UPDATES

ACQUARO, Phil & Nichole
12319 N Wing Shadow Lane
Marana, AZ 85758
Tel and e-mail no changes

BIEBAUM, Bill & Gina
PO Box 268
Louisville, NE 68037
Tel and email no change

BRUNNER, Al
New e-mail: aabrunner@verizon.net

CHERRY, Charles & Dr. Brenda
3300 Marchwood Place
Upper Marlboro, MD 20744-9045
(301) 952-8302
ccherry275@aol.com

CONNAUGHTON, David & Marilyn
6033 Martin Point Rd
Kitty Hawk, NC 27949
(252) 715-5007
dconnaughton65@gmail.com

CROUCH, Chris & Erin
10205 S. 124th Ave
Papillion, NE, 68046-4446
(402) 319-1423
chris.erincouch@gmail.com

DAVIS, Mrs. Joanna
5311 Desert Mountain Dr
Boulder, CO 80301
Tel, E-mail not known

DESROCHE, Doriss
855 E. Basse Road, Apt 138
San Antonio, TX 78209-1866
(210) 338-5916
Dorris.desroche@att.net

GARDNER, Joan
100 John Knox Rd, Room211
Tallahassee, FL, 32303
Tel, Email not known

HEIMARK, Nancy
5710 S. 108th Street
Omaha, NE 68137
(402) 391-0004

MARKS, Julene
New tel: (850) 598-1927

MORRIS, Dora
New e-mail: dorawmorris@gmail.com

NOLL, Valerie and Eric
4505 Risinghill Drive
Plano, TC 75024
Tel, E-mail no changes

PAUL, Norman
c/o Scott Paul
520 Ashford Road
Silver Spring, MD 20910
No tel and e-mail given

PELOQUIN, Perry & Suzanne
1269 Kables Mill Rd
Bellbrook, OH 45305
(703) 730-5275
perry.peloquin@gmail.com

PERRIZO, John & Michiko
17 NW 25th Street
Battle Ground, WA 98604
Tel and e-mail: No change

ROGERS, Ryan & Lindy
2350 Crystal Creek Drive
Papillion, NE 68046
(402) 677-8820
2ags93@gmail.com

SMITH, Allan & Marty
3617 Starlight Ranch Ave.
North Las Vegas, NV, 89081
(843) 708-9061
alanandmarty@comcast.net

TOBIAS, Lois
2216 Gregg Rd, #2
Bellevue, NE 68133
Tel and e-mail. no changes

VINCKIER, Andrew (Mick)
New e-mail: emvinckier@gmail.com

YANUZZI, Georgina
769 Birchpark Circle, Apt 103
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360-3894
(805) 495-8826

ADDITIONS/ TYPO
CORRECTIONS/

HOWE, Mary
Add e-mail: arlenandmary@icloud.com

HUGHES, Jim
Add e-mail: jjhe4b747@gmail.com

MALONEY
PH: 402-212-0093 (typo)

MITCHELL, Larry
950 Tall Pines Dr (typo)

PALMIERI, Elvio
Apt 409 (typo)
elviopalmieri@yahoo.com

NAMES TO REMOVE:

DECEASED (D) or

UNABLE TO LOCATE (U)

- (D) AH SAM, Reynette
- (D) BULLARD, Evelyn
- (U) CEMAN, Diann
- (D) FOREMAN, Mary
- (D) GARRITY, Thomas
- (D) GILGUT, Dody
- (D) GRIFFIN, Don
- (D) HEANY, Dorothy
- (U) LAWLEY, Mrs Wm (Amy)
- (D) PAUL, Joyce
- (D) PIKE, Jan
- (U) RESEN, Mary
- (U) ROSSER, Elly
- (D) RUSSELL, Duveen
- (D) SANDELL, Bonnie
- (U) SNOW, Betty
- (U) TRUHAN, Anne
- (D) URIBE, Susan
- (U) VASSER, Nadine



Videmus Omnia



55th Wing Association, Inc.
(Formerly – 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM (Address Update)

Name _____ Spouse _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

email: _____

Are you a Veteran? ____ Yes ____ No Branch of Service _____
(Dates of Service)

Are you a former member of the 55th Strat Recon Wing? _____

When were you a member of the 55th Strat Recon Wing? _____
(Dates of Service)



Are you a current or former member of the 55th Wing? _____

When were you a member of the 55th Wing? _____
(Dates of Service)



Which 55th Unit(s) were you a member? _____

Are you on active duty? ____ If so, with what unit? _____ Rank _____

What is your present occupation? _____

Return this form with dues, if applicable
(\$20 per year or \$55 for 3 years)*
To: **55TH WING ASSOCIATION, INC.**
P.O. BOX 13165
OFFUTT AFB, NE 68113

* Note – Expiration date of **NEW MEMBERS** only joining after 1 Oct extended to 31 December of following year
** Note – Dues expiration date – 31 December
***Note - Questions? **Contact Michael J. Cook, Membership Chairman, at Michael.Cook@cox.net, or at the above mailing address, or call (402) 578-5848.**

14 January 2016

