

Videmus Omnia

55th WING

ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2019

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Airplanes are not the only things which fly for the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth!*

The calendar certainly does, as well! Where in the world is 2019 going?!

With deference to Elizabeth Barrett Browning,
“...Let me count the ways...”:

Historic Flood: Offutt AFB (OAFB), NE on “The Ides of March” 2019

55th Wing Assn Reunion /Recon

Rendezvous: Omaha April 2019

55th Wing/Assn Monument Dedication:

Omaha National Cemetery (ONC)

Assn OPR: Mike Hoskins

55th Wing Commander Change: Colonel

Michael Manion to Colonel Gavin Marks

55th Wing Vice Commander Change: Colonel

Sheri Levan to Colonel Jon Shumate

55th Wing Director of Staff Change: LtCol

Aaron Gray to LtCol Steve Payne

55th Wing Assn/55th Fighter Group Wreath

Laying: Madingley American Cemetery (Cambridge, UK)

Assn OPR: Jim Thomas in concert with the 95th RS, RAF Mildenhall

National Cemetery Clean-up: OAFB Base Cemetery

Assn OPR: Jim Thomas

Memorial Day Ceremonies: Omaha National and Offutt Base Cemeteries

Memorial Day USAF Wreath Laying: ONC

Assn OPR: Presenter, Ham Kennedy
55th Wing Assn Check Donation

Presentation: USAF Ball Committee (\$550) Presenter, Don “Husker” Kelly

Assn OPR: Max Moore

2019 *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* Heritage Week:

Assn OPR: Mike “Coach” Hoskins

Hall of Fame: New inductees:

Capt (Sep) Ken Prater and

CMSgt (Ret) Carl Edmiston

Palm Trophy: 2019 O’Malley Award Winner (USAF Best Recon Crew, FIXX 74)

“Tales of the 55th”:

343rd RS Flood Recovery, RAF Rivet Joint Integration; 338th RS 20th

Anniversary (Assn’s VP RJ McMahon),

USAF Birthday: #72!

USAF Birthday Ball: Guest Speaker (former 55th Wing/CC) LtGen John Shanahan

Assn Award for Excellence: Recipient, Mike “Coach” Hoskins

55th Wing HQ offices on-going relocation to OAFB Bldg. 500, formerly HQ SAC

Currently HQ USSTRATCOM (in progress of moving to new state-of-the-art facility)

And yet, more on-going or coming before 2019 closes out:

Doolittle Award: AFHF to 55th Wing for Historical Unit Legacy (more following)

Assn OPR: Bill Strandberg

Wing Commander Dinner: TBD (Awaiting his availability)

Assn OPR: Pres Joe Spivey

55th Wing/Assn ONC Monument

Rededication: TBD before end of year.

Newly engraved granite base is installed; 55th Wing monument is just the second in ONC—other is for Vietnam Veterans

2021 Recon Rendezvous: Tucson, AZ:

Continued planning

Assn OPR: Val Dugie

On-line membership registrations:

Test period on-going

Assn OPR: Jon Adams

By-laws Review: TBD

Assn OPR: Kurt Kramer

RIVET AMBER Monument: TBD with

45th RS fund-raising on-going.

Remaining 55th Wing HQ offices relocation to

OAFB Bldg. 500 on going

On-going OAFB Runway Reconstruction

Assn OPR: Mark Schenck

Construction of 55th Operations Group

consolidated facility/flood recovery

Assn OPR: Mo Krishna

As you read through this latest “Max Production,” you will get even more exciting detailed articles on your **Association’s** recent activities and insightful glimpses into our future.

2019 has turned into a year celebrating and memorializing the fraternal bond the **Association** shares with the active duty *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth*.

Including the memorials mentioned above, the **Association** jointly received proclamations from several civic organizations highlighted by Congressman (NE-2, former **55th Wing/CC** and current **Association** member) **Don “Bits” Bacon’s** Congressional Record Proclamation.

Additionally, 2019 is a year of anniversaries: 25 years since the 45th RS reconstituted (previously, 24th SRS/RS) as part of the **55th Wing**; 20 years ago the 338th CTS stood-up, and it’s been 20 years since the **Wing’s** inception of what is now the Hall of Fame—just to name a few.

Now, we face the future.

In my crystal ball, I see two significant challenges as we begin the year’s last quarter. Both are on-going; and I hope, exciting for our members.

We are currently running a test program for on-line membership registrations, renewals and dues payments. **Jon Adams** (one of our up-and-coming “young bucks” still serving as a NebAirNatlGuard

navigator) is the technical mastermind behind this implementation, which is already in use.

Of course, hard copy membership forms, checks and mail still work, especially for new members to record their veteran status and contact info.

But, this methodology is more likely to be “user friendly” for tech savvy future/prospective members and/or renewals. More on this as the test progresses.

The other is the planning, Board member **Val Dugie**, is spearheading, for our next reunion in Tucson (Val’s hometown and, home (D-M AFB) to the *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth’s* Electronic Combat Group (ECG). Since we rendezvoused earlier this year, the actual Tucson date remains TBD; but look for more info as Val finalizes details.

As you can see, **YOUR Association** remains committed to “Honoring Those Who Served and Serving Those Who Do”. Thanks to all in our ranks who make this possible!

*Videmus Omnia,
Spy V*

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55TH WING CHANGE OF COMMAND



Major General Mary O’Brien presents the 55th Wing guidon to Colonel Gavin Marks. 55th Wing Command Chief Brian Thomas (center) was the guidon bearer.

(Photo by Charles Hammond, 55th Wing Public Affairs.)

Colonel Gavin P. Marks took command of the **55th Wing** at a ceremony on 14 June 2019 in Dock 1 of the Benny Davis Maintenance Facility.

He replaced **Colonel Michael H. Manion** who was awarded the Legion of Merit by the officiating

officer, Major General O'Brien, Commander, 25th Air Force. His next assignment is at the Pentagon.

MajGen O'Brien noted that the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* is the largest wing in Air Combat Command, and has the highest operations tempo of any Air Force unit.

Colonel Marks is a 1996 graduate of the USAF Academy and his previous assignment was Vice Commander of the 552nd Air Control Wing at Tinker AFB, OK, with E-4 AWACS aircraft.

A command pilot, Colonel Marks has had assignments in the Air Force Intern Program in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs, Pentagon; US Joint Forces Command's Joint Warfighting Center; he then commanded the 99th Flying Training Sqd at Randolph AFB, TX, before attending the National War College, Washington, DC, where he earned distinguished graduate honors.

He and his wife, **Deborah**, have two teenage children.

Among the several dignitaries in attendance included were **General Michael Hyten**, Commander US Strategic Command; Nebraska governor, **Pete Ricketts**; LtGeneral (Ret) **Leo Smith**, a former vice CINCSAC; and **Congressman Jeff Fortenberry** (NE-1).

The **Association** was represented by President Joe Spivey, and Broad members, **Ham Kennedy**, **Mo Krishna**, Max Moore and **Colonel Dave Priesman**. Former **55th SRW** commander, Colonel (Ret) **Steve Stevens**, and former (and last) 3902nd Air Base Wing commander Colonel (Ret) **Dick Purdum** and his wife, **Lorraine** attended.

Former **55th Command Chief** (Ret) **Michael Parente** (who was also the last command chief of the 3902nd) and the former Chief Master Sgt of the Air Force (#6) **James McCoy** and his wife, **Kathy**, were there.

Also: **55th Wingmen Frank Kumor, Rita Sanders, Jeff Wilke** and **Cathy Williams** attended.

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As seems to be a bi-annual summer pattern, a new **55th Wing** vice commander, **Colonel Jon Shumate**, an EC-130 veteran, arrived in early July. Plus, there were three Group changes of command that month; the Communications and Medical, **Colonel Steven Wieland** and **Colonel Julie**

Ostrand, respectively; and the Mission Support Group. The latter commander is **Colonel Alan Dayton**, a former **55th crewdog**, and who is a long time **Association** member. Numerous squadron commanders also changed chairs.

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Papillion, NE, 68133
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TREASURER'S REPORT

As of 30 September 2019, the treasury had an account balance (rounded) of 50,500. A significant portion of the money in the account comes from dues paid in advance. Therefore, we must keep money in reserve for each calendar year to which the dues apply. For example, dues paid for years thru 2022 are prorated and spent through the ensuing years.



One optimistic gent is paid through 2037, and another through **2048!** For them that may be life memberships. Who knows?

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

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

Thus, you may **donate** additional funds to the treasury, or in the memory of a comrade or loved one who has taken their final celestial journey.

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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MEMBERSHIP REPORT

There were **442 members in good standing as of 19 October 2019, compared with 437 on 20 May 2019. Holding steady.**

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

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

Occasionally, this effort has a payoff of exposure for the **Association**, and new active duty members to the organization, now at 18, plus one member of the Royal Air Force.

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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: 20XX. Please make a note of this year-date (31 December 20XX) to keep up with your dues.**

IF 2019 IS ON THAT LABEL, NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO RENEW YOUR DUES.

If you are not sure of your dues expiration date, to inquire on same, please e-mail to **treasurer@55wa.org**; or drop him a note at the address noted later in this text to get an update on your membership status.

When in doubt, send money. It will be credited.

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.

Life Members (LM) and widows are dues exempt.

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ALWAYS USE THE ASSOCIATION'S ADDRESS ON THE MEMBERSHIP FORM WHEN SENDING DUES OR NEW CONTACT INFO. THANK YOU.

**55 Wing Association, Inc.,
PO Box 13165
Offutt AFB, NE 68113**

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Please help us stay current.

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

Please use that form any time you pay dues, even if there are no changes to your basic info; 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 IN THE ASSOCIATION DATA BASE.

If sent first-class to a former address, we get returned mail if it cannot be forwarded. Third-class mail is not forwarded, nor returned.

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RECRUITING MEMBERS TO THE ASSOCIATION

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

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 commitment.

2) The **Association** has **no HHQ to answer to**: No additional dues, no quotas, no required reports.

3) We have **no problem filling** officer slots, Board, or committees. Usually new members think they may be tapped for those sorts of things as often 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.

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

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The **Association** welcomes not only *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* 'alumni', but associates, supporters and friends thereof. There are several members who did not serve in the **55th**, but were connected to the unit and/or its history in some way.

ASSOCIATION WEB SITE 55wa.org

The updated **55wa.org** web site is operating smoothly and securely. On the URL bar at the top of the page that the site now has an **upgraded security status** –

https:// rather than the former http://

You can now 'search' for a name rather than scrolling through long lists on the TAPS, or dues pages.

You can look at the **55th** Cold War Memorial page in the Heritage section and find the location of your "brick" in the patio, or purchase another one.

I'm always open to getting positive suggestions and recommendations to improve access to and navigation of the site.

If you would like to be notified when there is an update to a specific web site, such as **55wa.org**, here are a few web content monitoring tools that notify you of changes in your favorite pages so you don't have to access them frequently. (A limited number of web sites are free.)

Versionista (<https://versionista.com/>)

ChangeTower (<https://changetower.com/>)

Go to the site, set up your account, and start monitoring. (I use Trackly (<https://trackly.io/>))

Good luck.

Jim Maloney, the Web Guy.

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OMAHA NATIONAL CEMETERY MEMORIAL DAY

The **55th Wing Association's** "Presidential Team" participated in ceremonies on 27 May 2019, Memorial Day, at the Omaha National Cemetery (ONC) in Sarpy County.

In addition to USAF wreath layers, **Ham Kennedy** and **Airman Darius Jackson** (**55th Communications Group**) (*photo at right*), **Association** related



attendees included: ONC Support Committee members, **Vito Spadaro** and **John Johnson**; **Deb Miner** (wife of **Association** member, **Jeff**) who presented the Daughters of the American Revolution wreath; **Pat Kennedy**, who led the Kennedy clan; **Association** President Joe Spivey; Colonel Michael Manion, **55th Wing** Commander, and **55th Wing** Command Chief Brian Thomas.

Speakers delegation was headed by **Nebraska Lt Governor Mike Foley** and **Congressman Don Bacon** (former **55th Wing** commander).

The **55th Wing Association** was the first organization recognized in the narrative of contributors for wreaths funding. This is the second year in a row the **Association** was honored to present the Air Force wreath, last year by President Spivey.

(Photo and article contributed by Spy V, edit and added info by Moore.)

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UK MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY 2019

The *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* again carried out a Memorial Day tradition at the Madingley (Cambridge, UK) American Cemetery with a wreath laying. The wreath is provided (since 2014) by the **55th Wing Association** and presented by active-duty **55th** airmen in honor of the **55th Fighter Group** from WWII.

CMSgt Dan Humber, Superintendent of the 95th Recon Squadron, a **55th Wing** unit at RAF Mildenhall, UK, and did the presentation honors.

(Photo provided by Chief Humber.)

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55TH WING HALL OF FAME 2019

President Spivey opened the proceedings by making appropriate introductions, then relating the history of the **55th** Ceremonial Bell from its beginning when a **55th SRW** RB-47 crew TDY

from Forbes AFB, KS, to RAF Upper Heyford, UK, in 1965 procured a bell to be placed in the officers club bar for traditional purposes, of course.

In a convoluted and interesting series of events, travels, and locations, it eventually was presented to the **55th** at Offutt, AFB, NE, in August of 2002.

Moderator Spivey then invited **55th Wing** Vice Commander Colonel **Jon (Shu) Shumate** to ring the bell and make remarks regarding the Hall of Fame and Tales.

Five attending Hall members then rang the bell in turn (*see photo following*).

Spivey read the narratives for each 2019 inductee. Each was introduced, made remarks, and Colonel Shumate presented their plaques.

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Captain (Separated) **Kenneth C. (Ken) Prater** embodies the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* Hall of Fame's purpose. Ken consistently makes his mark on the **55th Wing** mission in ways which are insightful and focused; yet, visionary.

After completing Electronic Warfare (EW) School as a Distinguished Graduate, Capt Prater's first operational assignment was with the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing's** 343rd Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron as a Raven 1 in RC-135s flying worldwide operational sorties.

His EW expertise was quickly recognized with a follow-on assignment as the Chief, Electronics Reconnaissance Operations, where Ken fielded the **Wing's** first Tactical Information Broadcast Service (TIBS) and Electronic Warfare Training Systems.

During Operation DESERT SHIELD, Capt Prater deployed with the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC); later, rejoining the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth's* Combat Support to Operation DESERT STORM. Following the war, Ken was



assigned to AFMC's Detachment in Greenville, TX, as RC-135 RIVET JOINT (RJ) Project Engineer for ELINT systems.

Ken later transitioned his military role to contractor status with Greenville's 645th Aeronautical Systems Squadron as a project engineer. In this capacity, Prater continues to fly RJ sorties, logging 10,000+ flight hours over the past 37 years.

Ken is the "father of the RJ ELINT suite", defining requirements, engineering collection systems, flight testing, designing concepts, hosting numerous RC-135 Program Management Reviews and ensuring logistics support to advance 55th Wing capabilities well into the future.

Ken Prater is a consummate professional with decades of 55th Wing affiliation, and is exceedingly worthy of 2019 Hall of Fame induction.

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CMSgt (Retired) Carl E. (Chief) Edmiston has served the United States Air Force for the past 46+ years, devoted to sustaining service-wide aircraft; while always grooming the next generation of maintenance professionals.



Chief Edmiston has a distinctive and decades-long legacy contributing to *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* success while serving with multiple squadrons, groups, platforms and aircraft fleets.

During his active-duty years, Carl served at Offutt AFB as the 55th Wing's

Senior Enlisted Advisor; 55th Operations Group's RC-135 Aircraft Manager/Superintendent; 55th Maintenance Squadron's Flight Chief/Maintenance Superintendent; 1st Airborne Command and Control Squadron's Maintenance Superintendent; and 38th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron's Maintenance Superintendent.

Forever a maintainer, Chief Edmiston began his USAF career as a propulsion technician specializing in J57 Turbojet engines and Engine Test Cell analyses. This acumen led to the Chief's assignments to the SR-71 program, two HQ SAC

tours, and a remote to Kunsan Air Base, Korea, prior to his 55th Wing assignments.

In addition to remarkable active-duty success, Carl's post-military, contractor support to the 55th Wing is equally noteworthy.

As a contractor with the BIG SAFARI Program Management Office at Wright Patterson AFB, OH, he directly supports all aspects of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth's* flying missions as the RC-135 Logistics Manager. In this capacity, Edmiston leads RC-135 Health of the Fleet Aircraft Tracking and Reporting, Aircraft Availability Improvement Plan (AAIP), Quality Assurance Plans (QASPs) and advances the UK/RJ Foreign Military Sales (FMS) case and more.

Chief Carl Edmiston's superior 55th Wing contributions have richly earned 2019 Hall of Fame recognition.

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The obligatory lodge pose of Hall of Famers at this year's event: L to R: McMahon, Steve Stevens, Prater, Edmiston, Moore, Rich Holsinger, Cook. (Thomas went MIA)

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When someone is dead, they do not know they are dead. The pain is felt by others. The same is true when someone is stupid.

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You will never find anyone who can give you a clear, rational, and compelling reason as to why we observe daylight savings time.

Dave Barry, Humorist

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TALES OF THE 55TH



20th EDITION

Mike 'Coach' Hoskins, taking the mike from past-president and long time Tales emcee Jim Thomas, began his initial stint by stating of the 'rules of engagement' and displaying the Robb Hoover shepherd's crook, which, if needed, would be employed to extract any overly long-winded speakers. (*It is an idle threat.*)

He noted the several unit memorabilia tables that were on display in the atrium of the Weather Wing building. This was yet another new venue for the events.

The first speaker was **Captain Ian Thompson** from the 343rd RS talked about friendly squadron rivalries and 'spirit missions'; then gave a detailed report on how the March flood affected Bldg 497 and the squadron specifically. Squadron personnel made a valiant effort to rescue as much as they could before being forced to evacuate.

He also detailed how the ops squadrons declared peace, banded together to keep operating and completing RC-135 missions in spite of the flooding.



Showing a sense of humor even in disaster, one creative crewdog designed this patch.



Next up was **RAF 1Lt Tom Hayward**, an exchange officer attached to the 343rd, who documented the years long cooperative effort between the 338th CCTS in training RAF crews in the RC-135 Rivet Joint aircraft prior to the RAF receiving three of the aircraft, called *Airseeker*. They are assigned to RAF 51 Squadron at RAF Waddington, UK.

He related that the transition period and integration process were essential to meeting the challenges and to the successes, which included RAF crew members flying joint training and operational missions with **55th Wing** crews.

SSgt Kyle Beers then gave her rendition of the history of the 338th's origins in WWII up to the Cold War. Squadron commander **LtCol Jose Zambrano** spoke about the state of the unit's consistently high quality and quantity of the RC training program graduates from each class.

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They were followed by the "*Godfather of 55th Wing RC-135 Combat Crew Training*" and the first commander of the 338th Combat Crew Training Sqd (CCTS), **Ricky McMahon** (Hall of Famer, **Association** vice president).



Ricky Mac cuts the anniversary cake.

On the **20th anniversary** of the formal training unit's establishment, he recounted that, as the project officer for the five man Tiger Team for two and a half years, the obstacles, misinformation, misconceptions, trials and tribulations involved in their efforts, and the process to make it a reality.

The goal was to change the paradigm, and transition the Wing's diverse, self-taught, inefficient training program, with little to no standardization across the **Wing's** squadrons, into a model of efficiency in Air Combat Command (ACC).

Though the **55th** had talked of, and attempted several times, to have its own training program for decades, it was an arduous road of inception, planning, and executing all the bureaucratic and logistics requirements before coming to fruition.

In January 1997, the Tiger Team was given access to the vacant Bldg 49 as its working space to develop a formal training unit. They used second-hand office equipment, did a lot of self-help renovation projects, all the while developing lesson syllabi.



By the end of year, they had secured paint, paneling, carpeting, and perfected the art of bartering (*scrounging?*) to obtain training devices and personnel in order to begin an actual training regimen as the newly established **55th** Operations Group Training (OGT) Division.

The OGT instructors started with academics and simulators before returning the students to their respective squadrons for the completion of their training requirements and mission qualification.

Once the Contract Aircrew Training/Courseware Development Team was approved by ACC, and personnel were hired, the OGT instructor force moved on to include flight line operations.

With the **338th** CCTS activation on **20 September 1999**, the transition towards efficiency for the newly approved programmed student training was well on the way.

McMahon concluded that the real reason for the overall success was the absolute belief that the ***Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth*** is truly a family and culture surrounded by a community relationship with the Omaha Metro area that is unlike any other USAF organization.

With that bond, and the inclusion of the Nebraska Air National Guard in the early 2000s, the **55th** Wing’s training members who followed him over the past two decades, have taken the concept into an exemplary and successful organization.

He challenged the current members to “cherish their time in the ***Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth*** and continue the legacy of excellence”. ***Hoo-rah!!***

*(This article with Ricky Mac’s input, is by far the most extensive coverage of any previous Tale. It is a story of a truly historic chapter in the 55th’s unique heritage absolutely worthy of a standalone article that has not been published in the **Videmus Omnia** before.*

*It is also ample testimony for McMahon’s Hall of Fame induction in 2014. Rarely has anyone made such a significant and lasting impact on the **Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth.**)*

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Presentation of the **Major Willard Palm Trophy** for the **55th** Wing’s recon crew of the year went to FIXX 74, a 27 person crew consisting of personnel from the 343rd, 97 Intel Sqd, 95 RS and 488th Intel Sqd. They were also the recipients of the **General Jerome O’Malley Trophy** as recon crew of the year in all of Air Force.



Colonel Eric Paulson, Ops Group Commander, (pictured at left in photo above) made the presentation to four representatives of the crew. **Captain Kevin Rose** was the aircraft commander.

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L-R: McMahon, SSgt Beers, Coach, RAF 1Lt Hayward, Captain Thompson.

The ceremonies wound up with the traditional speakers toast with their memento mugs.

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AIR FORCE BALL 2019 OFFUTT AFB

The gala was held Saturday 21 September, at the Mid-America Center, Council Bluffs, IA. The largest formal social event of the year at Offutt was hosted by the **55th Wing** Commander, Colonel Gavin Marks and his wife Deborah.

It celebrated the 72nd anniversary of the US Air Force as a separate service.



Logo by *Josh Plueger, 55th Wing Public Affairs Graphic Artist*

The theme was *Honoring Our Past, Inspiring The Future.*

Opening with the color guard, National Anthem and blessing, the program included personnel in WWII uniforms during a tribute to heroes of that era via video and narration.

The ceremonies also included the presentation of the **55th Wing Association** Award for Excellence and introduction of the 2019 **55th Wing** Hall of Fame inductees.



Rosie the Riveter and co-workers showing some muscle.

The this year's Master of ceremonies was **Rob McCartney** (KETV Ch 7 news anchor), whose late father was a retired Air Force colonel.

During his welcoming remarks, and recognition of the Wing's senior staff and other distinguished visitors (DVs), attending **55th Wing** Hall of Famers and members of the **55th Wing Association** were asked, in turn, to stand and be recognized.

LtGen John "Jack" N. T. Shanahan, Director, Joint Artificial Intelligence Center, Office of the Department of Defense Chief Information Officer, Pentagon, Arlington, VA, was the featured speaker. He is a former **55th Wing** commander, April 2009-March 2011. He also spoke at the 2015 **55th Wing** Ball and at the **Association's** Tampa reunion banquet in April 2017. Always a staunch supporter.



He began with humorous comments and a photo montage about his resemblance to former Cornhusker football coach Bo Pellini to whom he credited with being introduced to 'colorful' language, all to the delight of the audience.

Attendance this year of 890 included active duty personnel from all units and services at Offutt, retirees, civilian dignitaries, and guests.

DVs included **Association** President Joe Spivey, Board members Mo Krishna, and wife **Susanne**; Don Kelly, who is also Chairman of the Sarpy County Board of Commissioners, and his wife **Melinda**, secretary to the **55th** commander; Max and **Carol Moore**.

Also, former **55th SRW** Commander and Hall of Fame member **Steve Stevens** and his wife, **Suzanne**, their daughter **Laura** and son-in-law **Tom Miller**.

All in all, about 80 **Association** members and guests attended. (*Too numerous to mention, but they know who they are.*)

Congressman (BG Ret) Don Bacon and wife **Angie** graced the head table. There were general officers from USSTRATCOM, as well as numerous officers and senior NCOs from units at Offutt.

Other DVs included **55th Wingmen: Frank Kumor**, wife **Patricia**; **Rita** and **Rick Sanders**, and **Dr. Linda Ford**; **Bellevue Mayor Rusty** and **Mrs. Hike**; Air Force Association Regional and State President **Chris Canada** (an **Association** member and former Wing Director of Staff).

Two former **55th Wing** Command Chiefs (Ret) **Vicki Swingle** and **Rich Casey** with wife **India** were there.

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After an excellent dinner and the guest speaker's presentation, Colonel Marks in his closing remarks, among other statements, thanked and recognized the Ball committee for their outstanding work in planning and executing the event; thanked the sponsors; and the venue staff.

He was **specifically** and **particularly effusive** in his recognition and praise of the **55th Wing Association**. Colonel Marks noted that in all his Air Force experience and numerous assignments, he has never encountered an 'alumni association' so organized and dedicated to supporting the active wing and the heritage of the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifty**.

(*Ed. comment: As a very seasoned veteran of the 55th, I can testify that Colonel Marks' statement is a common and recurring observation from wing kings who come to the Wing.*)

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The Ball committee was headed by **Captain Bryce Neil**, 38th RS, and Offutt Top Three leaders:

SMSgt Norman Palone, 55th Logistics Readiness Squadron, and **MSgt Butch McCarty**, 55th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.



The Association donated \$550 to the Ball fund on 28 August 2019. Pictured are: Board member Don Kelly (right) making the ceremonial presentation to the Ball committee chairs: from the left: SMSgt Palone, MSgt McCarty, and Capt Neil. (Photo by Moore.)

The **Association** subsequently received a framed Certificate of Appreciation from the Ball committee "For your generous donation contribution...." to the Ball.

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55TH WING ASSN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE 2019

The **Association's** 2019 Award for Excellence was presented to **Mike (Coach) Hoskins** at the **55th Wing** hosted annual USAF Birthday Ball.

The award was presented on behalf of the **Association** by Past President **Jim (Strike) Thomas**. Notably, Hoskins took over the annual **Tales of the 55th** event host duty from Strike and led his inaugural event this year.

During his active duty service as a Raven with the **55th Operations Group** and the Nebraska ANG's 170th Group, Hoskins consistently demonstrated self-initiative, strategic vision, legacy preservation and service-before-self character. A retired Lt colonel, he is currently assigned as a Wing government service employee in the **55th Wing Plans Division**.

Having witnessed and prepared for Offutt's 2011 Missouri flood reactions, Coach foresaw what

would be required when, on the *Ides of March* (March 15, 2019) a historic flood targeted the base. He was already developing a “what if” mentality far-ahead of other reaction efforts.

As an **Association** member, Hoskins has a deep respect for *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* history directly drawn from years of RC-135 flight operations, contractor support, and government service.

Without regard for personal safety, and taking an “ask for forgiveness later, rather than permission now” attitude, Coach used his vehicle parked as close as possible to **Wing** HQ and began removing *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* memorabilia collected over decades of unit existence.

His rescue operations required several round trips over several hours to ensure a maximum salvage affect. Those self-initiated operations prevented the loss of numerous unique artifacts to damaging floodwaters.

In doing so, Coach preserved items which included the **Wing’s** entire Hall of Fame collection, award winner plaques, historic mementos, cherished documents, and more. Even more incredible, most of the salvaged history was (and some, still are) preserved in the Hoskins’ home until appropriate reinstallation locations are determined.



*Hoskins on right, Thomas presenting.
(Photo by Charles Hammond,
55th Wing Public Affairs.)*

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MAIL ‘N STUFF

Max:

Another great reunion under our belts, and another great edition of *Videmus Omnia* arrived in the mail today. Again, thanks for a great newsletter.

I can’t wait for the next reunion in Tucson!

Clark Hinkel, Ellicott City, MD

(From an e-mail, 28 May 2019)

(Spelling of last name checked and rechecked after being pinged from last issue of VO. Ed.)

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Contributed by Frank Schoonover

(From an e-mail 28 May 2019. See TAPS.)

My late wife **Hilde** was born May 25, 1930 in the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia in the small village of Niederullersdorf to **Josef Redlich** and **Camilla Hausmann Redlich**, the third of four children.

She grew up dirt poor. I’ve been to her birthplace. Maybe 50 houses right on the Polish border. Electricity, yes. Indoor plumbing, no. She had to get water in buckets from a nearby pond. Many of the homes had dirt floors covered by linoleum even in the 1990’s. (not hers). Wood stove heat in winter. Severe poverty conditions.

Hilde attended a one-room K-12 school. Her wartime years were traumatic with barely sufficient food for the family. At one point she contracted



These wood covered scrapbooks, which date to the days when the 55th was at Forbes, were among the trove of items rescued when Coach actually broke into the historian’s office with the help of Offutt fire department personnel. There is a video.

Mike Hoskins’ “above and beyond” service clearly demonstrates the very best of *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* “can do” attitude.

(Edited from President Spivey’s announcement at the Ball.)

stomach typhus and spent nearly a year in the hospital. At that time there were very few survivors of the disease.

Her father was drafted into the German army and sent to Russia where he was severely wounded and transferred to Italy to recuperate. Eventually, he was captured by the Americans as a POW.

The Sudetenland was populated primarily by people of German descent. When Hitler and the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia, they bypassed that area and wreaked havoc on the rest of the country.

When the war ended, the Czech government returned as Communists. In retaliation for the Nazi wrong doings, the Czechs took out their frustrations on the populace of the Sudetenland.

Hilde, then 15, and her family were evicted with no possessions, loaded into boxcars and sent to a labor camp in Poland. For the next year she was forced to work in a coal mine.

When working in the coal mines, she got better rations because of the hard labor, which she shared with the rest of the family. She said that she also got adept at stealing from the mess hall to supplement their food.

Her family eventually moved to Frydlandt in the now Czech Republic. She has a dubious claim to fame. As a blond, blue-eyed, Aryan little girl, she was selected to present flowers to Hitler when he came to town to gloat. It was something she never spoke of as an adult.

The labor camp was a step down from a concentration camp, but still pretty brutal, co-ed barracks, hard, double-deck, multi-shared bunks.

Eventually her father was repatriated to West Germany and through the auspices of the Red Cross, was able to get his family to Germany.

At 21 Hilde immigrated to the United States as a displaced person settling in Houston, TX. She had no money and spoke limited English. Securing concurrent jobs as a caterer, movie usherette and pharmacy clerk, she established herself in this country. Since becoming a citizen in 1955, she never missed voting in an election.

Hilde met her husband-to-be, a young man in the Air Force in flight training, on a city bus and stood him up on their first date. Just six dates later, they got married. During 64 years of marriage, we

have lived in many places in this country and around the world. We adopted three children.

Having worked in pharmacies in Texas, Idaho, and Spokane, she became a pharmacy technician. During Expo '74 she was an interpreter, speaking Czech, German, Polish and some Russian.

At Eielson, she was the co-manager of the base thrift shop. She was a fantastic cook, a better than average bowler, and showed our Airedales at various dog shows in the west. Her rose garden was the envy of our neighbors.

Added info: I was on **Rich Clark's** crew during my entire **55th** service, 1964-68; three DFCs. Rich and I were among the first **55th**ers to go to Castle AFB, CA, and KC-135 training, and the among first RC-135 crewdogs to go to Offutt.

(Ed. Note: We get many 'there I was' guy stories, but very rarely do we receive these types of sagas about spouses. Perhaps this will encourage others to write interesting items.

Also noted that spellchecker nearly broke down looking at names and places in this article.)

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Thank you, Max.

The newsletter, as always, is a great publication. You do great work.

Love the Membership Directory. What a lot of work.

Also, thank you for your service to this great country of ours.

Dorene Sherman, Bellevue, NE

(From an e-mail 12 June 2019)

* * * * *

Hey, Max:

I've been taking a trip down my RB-47 memory lane (*days with the 55th SRW*). Finally got a copy of *The Little Toy Dog* and read it. The July 1 1960 shoot down (*of the Palm, Olmsted, McKone RB-47H crew*) was still a hot topic when I arrived at Forbes AFB, KS, in October of 1965; and was part of the course material during my "visit" to the PAR survival school.

I really enjoyed the book and highly recommend it to all **55th** crew dogs. My only knock would be the limited coverage of the EWs involved. (*Eugene Posa, Dean Phillips, Oscar Goforth*) I think that there should have been more about their backgrounds and something about the probability of

a successful ejection from the bomb bay. Could they have survived and been captured?

I recently purchased another book about the development and evolution of the B-47. It is *Boeing B-47 Stratojet, Strategic Air Command's Transitional Bomber*, by **C. Mike Habermehl** and **Robert S. Hopkins, III**. It has over 300 pages of information, technical data and pictures of all the B/RB-47 variants.

There is extensive coverage of the **55th** missions in the RB-era with significant events and pictures of a few crewmembers that I knew and/or flew with. (Sorry to say, Max, you did not make the cut -- something about a height problem?)

There is a section about our flights out of OL-7 (Clark AB, PI) during the Vietnam War. We flew in conjunction with the "Bumpy Action" drones in an attempt to get the SA-2 fusing data. The authors state: "The final mission took place on 13th February 1966 and ultimately collected the necessary SA-2 fusing signal" (pg. 163).

However, I flew the mission out of OL-7 with **George Cummings** (AC) in July of 1966. We flew missions on 13, 16 and 22 July (data from my Form 5 shows combat time in RB-47H).

On the 22 July mission the EWs recorded the fusing signal and we landed at Bein Hoa to download the data. I cannot remember the names of the nav or EWs. The navigator may have been "**Marvelous**" **Marv Mollnow** since we flew out of Shemya together in December 1966.

I'd appreciate hearing from anyone who can shed some light on those missions.

By the way, **Dick "Lurch" Mangold**, was a groomsman in my wedding and I didn't have to stand on an ammo can for the pictures.

Cheers, *wgray4@cfl.rr.com*

Willie Gray, Melbourne, FL,

(From an e-mail, 27 June 2019)

(Ed. got pinged twice in this one. Moore scar tissue. No typo.)

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Max:

Outstanding job on the last newsletter.

Another "HQ". (Highly qualified.)

Hugh R. Hunton, Keithville, LA.

(Former 55th and CEVG navigator evaluator.)

(E-mail 14 July 2019)

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Max:

I don't recognize many names in the newsletter anymore, but I read it from cover to cover as soon as I get it.

I was proud and honored to be associated with such great organization, which has carried on so magnificently over the years. It had some of the finest, most patriotic people one could ever meet.

Regards,

Roby Craft, (90 years young), New Smyrna Beach, FL.

(From an e-mail 22 August 2019)

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Hey Max!

I've sent my membership renewal check, so I should be in 'good standing' as an **Association** member again.

Regarding the memorial here at Wright-Pat; has anyone volunteered (*for the clean-up duty*)? I'd be interested in teaming up with anyone to help. Let me know. (*Steve has since volunteered to help. See related articles in this issue.*)

Also, do you have any info on how many **55th**'rs are out this way? If they don't get together already, I'd like to see about doing something about that if able. (*Good plan.*)

Thanks,

Steve Ling, Cincinnati, Oh

(From e-mails 20-21 August 2019.)

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82ND RS BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION RECAP

Contributed by **Mace MacElhaney**

(Mace was the first commander when the 82nd RS was reactivated as a unit under the 55th Wing, October 1991-July 1993.)

Max:

I just returned from Okinawa Sunday night (16 June) where I attended the 82nd birthday celebration of the 82nd Reconnaissance Squadron.

It was great to visit the old stomping grounds and see how things have changed, and also how some things remain the same. Here is a (partial) summary of my visit:

Tuesday, 11 June, arrived Naha airport and met by **Lt Col John Isacco**, the current 82 RS/CC. We then cruised up the four lane expressway that goes from Naha to Nago in the north. The trip used to take an hour and a half up Hwy 58, now took a mere 30 minutes. Got to my room and got a welcome package, which was well stocked.



Andy Marotta and his wife, **Paris**, were the only other off-island attendees. He was 82nd commander, 1998-2000.

Many of the old billeting buildings are gone and have been replaced by high rise buildings. I was in one right across the street from the Shogun Inn, the billeting office.

Wednesday, 12 June: a day to get acclimated. The squadron got us day passes to the Hilton resort, which is close to the main gate to Kadena AB. There is a Doubletree Hotel next to it, and an area called the American Village, which has dozens of touristy type shops. All of this is new since I was there and seems to have been built up right out of the sea.

That night I met with **Scott Brenner**, a former cadet at the Air Force Academy (Class of 2009) who we had sponsored years ago. He is assigned to the 909th Air Refueling Squadron; his wife, **Michelle**, is a Navy doctor at Camp Foster. Their apartment is right outside the main gate to Kadena and we walked to a great hamburger place near there.

Thursday, 13 June: breakfast at the Banyon Tree golf course and a briefing by the base historian, followed by a tour of some historical places on base. Discovered some things I never knew about.

Lunch at the brand new and huge Rocker NCO Club with 82RS airmen. Some pretty sharp men and women there!! That was followed by a squadron and aircraft tour and squadron briefing. The main squadron building, which houses ops and intel and some admin, is the same with some renovations.

The former maintenance building is now home to an aeromedical evacuation squadron, and 82nd

maintenance section has moved down the flight line to a hangar they share with the AWACS squadron.

In 1991 I remembered stumbling across an old 82 SRS patch that had been etched into the sidewalk near our maintenance building. I went searching for it again, not quite remembering where it was, but after a short search, sure enough found it!! The patch was the one with the leather-helmeted hog sitting on a torii gate holding a martini glass. Unfortunately, half the patch had been cemented over and we could just make out the 82 SRS at the top.



That night, we had dinner at Sam's by the Sea with the squadron commander and about a dozen members of the squadron. The place hasn't changed a bit including the uniforms the waitresses wear! Still great food and atmosphere.

Friday, 14 June: we were supposed to 'help' launch an ops sortie in the morning, but it was cancelled due to weather. This was the only day that the weather was bad and it was just in the morning. Other than that, it was pretty nice with temps ranging from 75 to 83 and the humidity wasn't bad.

We then participated in a squadron call and got a chance to tell some war stories from our days back when. I told the assembled group that I was well aware that when I was in the 82d in 1991-1993 many in the room had not yet been born!

While at the squadron, I was rummaging through some of the historical records the 82nd has and came across a book with all the missions flown by the 82nd; and whose names did I recognize? **Robb Hoover** and Max Moore!!

Had lunch with a couple of the squadron spouses and then wandered Gate 2 Street for a bit. Gate 2 Street appeared a little run down with several businesses closed and a few tattoo parlors; but BC Street was thriving with several businesses. Anyone remember Charlie's Tacos or Tiger Embroidery?

The Officer's Club and Jack's Place haven't changed at all, although unfortunately, Jack's was closed for major renovations during my stay.



O Club with high rise billeting building seen in the far right background.

That night we had dinner at a sushi place with the 82nd RS ops officer and about another dozen squadron mates.



Saturday, 15 June: this was the big squadron birthday party pig roast and BBQ at Torii Station beach. The picture at left is (L-R) me, LtCol Isacco, and Marotta. Good

turnout and good people.

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Some observations about Okinawa and the squadron:

Okinawa appears to be more modern and cleaner than I remember. Highway 58 is more congested. There have been a lot of modern buildings put up in the past 26 years, which isn't a surprise. Okinawa is a big tourist destination for the mainland Japanese. Everyone spoke very good English.

The biggest change in the squadron is that the operations tempo (mission flights), is much higher now. Sortie length is not as long now.

The day I arrived, Rivet Joint, Combat Sent, and Cobra Ball aircraft were all on station.

Most of the aircrews get rental cars authorized, and stay for 90 day deployments (except Cobra Ball) versus the 24 days back when.

Cobra Ball is here so often they have a dedicated billeting building for aircrews and the maintenance personnel.

It was a blast and we are now considering having a mini-82RS reunion of the early '90s crowd

sometime next year. We just have to pick a time and place.

Mace MacElhaney, Colorado Springs, CO.

(Edited and abbreviated from an e-mail 18 June 2019, all photos by Mace.)

*(Ed. Notes: An extensive report and more photos are on the **Association** web site.*

*LtCol Isacco will be assigned as the **55th Wing Ops Group** deputy commander in November.)*

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HISTORIAN TO BE HONORED

Cargill Hall, a career military historian (former Chief Historian of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and the National Reconnaissance Office) will receive the **Major General I. B. Holley Award for 2019**, to be presented on October 9 at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, VA.

All of you who know, or know of, Cargill Hall, especially those in the recon community, appreciate that this honor is well earned. Cargill has in his writings made sure that the Cold War highly classified recon programs, once declassified, were not forgotten.

His in depth articles on over flights, aircraft and satellite, and the politics behind them, are must reading for anyone who deems himself or herself a scholar on the Cold War.

Most recently I was honored when Cargill wrote the foreword for my latest book, *Silent Warriors, Incredible Courage*. As I state in the preface of the book, without his diligent research and support, I could not have written that book.

I will be there when Cargill is honored on October 9 by the Air Force Historical Foundation.

There is much we do in the Air Force that for good reason is done in silence to insure the safety, at times survival, of our country. The names of the men and woman who put their lives on the line in doing so all too frequently are never made known.

Cargill Hall lifted some of that curtain to share with the public and recognize people who never broke their silence.

Wolf Samuel, Fairfax Station, VA,

RB-47H Raven/EB-66 Crow

(Edited from an e-mail 27 June 2019)

(Ed. Note: Early in his Air Force career, Cargill was an historian among several at SAC HQ. He is a long time member of the Association.)

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RIVET AMBER REMEMBERED

Fifty years to the date after the one of a kind RC-135 aircraft and its crew of 19 were lost over the Barents Sea on 5 June 1969, a remembrance event was held at the 45th Recon Sqd at Offutt AFB.



Pictured: LtCol Corey O'Tool, 45th RS commander at the time (left), and King Hawes pose holding commemorative plaques in front of a portrait of RIVET AMBER airborne.

(Photo courtesy of 55th Wing Public Affairs)

LtCol (Retired) **Kingdon Hawes**, who (then-Captain) was acting commander of the 24th SRS (under the 6th Strat Wing at Eielson AFB, AK) on that fateful date, gave an account of the incident to about 100 current and former members of the unit.

The crew, commanded by **Charles "Mitch" Michaud**, and aircraft, tail #62-4137, departed Shemya AFB, AK, for what was to be a routine short hop back to Eielson after a deployment.

Forty minutes into the flight, the crew reported heavy vibration and were donning oxygen masks. That was the last anyone heard of them, although there were HF key clicks for another 45 minutes, adding to the mystery.

An extensive search and rescue operation ensued for two weeks, but no sign of the aircraft or its crew were ever found. All souls were presumed dead. Many on board were former members of the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing** at Forbes AFB, KS, and six were deployed from Offutt.

That was the largest number of people lost in an RC incident, although variations of the plane have been flying since the mid-1960s.

Hawes established and maintains a web site, www.rc135.com, with a wealth of information dedicated to the operations and personnel associated with LISA ANN/RIVET AMBER/RIVET BALL that predated COBRA BALL, for those who are interested in that history.

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The 45th RS is planning to establish a monument to commemorate RIVET AMBER in front of Bldg 40 at Offutt.

The time line is to begin construction early next year and have the monument in place for a dedication ceremony in May 2020.

The fund raising goal is for \$10,000. So far, nearly \$7000 has been donated. King Hawes made a substantial personal contribution.

Donations can be sent to 45th Reconnaissance Sqd, 101 Washington Sq, Ste 116, Offutt AFB, NE, 68113. ATTN: RIVET AMBER Fund.

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45RS 25 YEARS AT OFFUTT

On 10 August 2019, 45th Reconnaissance Sqd (Wildcats) alums celebrated the squadron's 25th (silver) anniversary as a ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*** operational squadron at Offutt AFB, NE. The squadron's portfolio now includes the Wing's entire fleet of COBRA BALL (RC-135S), COMBAT SENT (RC-135U), CONSTANT PHOENIX (WC-135) and OPEN SKIES (OC-135) aircraft and the personnel who fly and maintain them.



In addition to the above aircraft, the 45th RS also once ran the ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth's*** Accelerated Copilot Enrichment (ACE) Detachment, flying T-38s, and later T-37s, before the program was discontinued.

45th RS roots trace back to WWII, and the unit saw action in Korea and Vietnam before deactivation. Due to the squadron's distinguished

lineage, the 45th RS was reactivated in 1994 from the 55th Wing's 24th RS (after decades previously affiliated with the 6th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Eielson/Shemya AFBs, AK).

Over its 25 years with the 55th Wing, the squadron has often been recognized as another *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* "gem", receiving several General Jerome O'Malley awards for best USAF Recon Crew of the Year, ACC's Best Maintenance Unit, and numerous other recognitions.

This photo shows seven previous 45th RS commanders who attended, representing 14 years leading the squadron, and the current commander.



In chronologic order served they are: L-R: Joe Spivey, **Robert "Bo" Marlin**, **James Gapinski**, **Bruce Heylmun**, **Brian Humphrey**, **Ross Bullock**, **Brian Thomas**, and **LtCol Andrew "Tripper" Maus**, currently commanding.

This year's 25th Anniversary was attended by nearly 150 Wildcats from operations, maintenance, supply, intelligence, a unique contractor support team, and others.

(Contributed by Spy V. Edited by Moore.)

Photo provided by Humphrey.)



38th and 343RD RELOCATE

The 343rd Recon Sqd at Offutt was flooded out of the hallowed halls of Bldg 497 last March. The 38th had to evacuate its area in the northwest wing of the Bennie Davis facility.

Ever since then, the troops have used a variety of temporary facilities on and off base for their operations and commander's calls.

The Raven's roost and the Hellcats now reside in rooms in Bldg 47, the northern most building on the east side of the parade ground, cohabiting with the 45th RS. *Talk about a quantum mass of crewdogs!*

LtCol Nelson Tirado, 343rd commander, reported that personnel in both units have been engaged in a lot of renovation of the new digs.

One of the major projects for the Ravens is to re-establish the Hoover Lounge as a squadron 'rest' area.

Much of the memorabilia in 497 was destroyed, so the troops are attempting to secure more of same to enhance the heritage room. They are asking for photos, articles, models, patches, whatever, even from the Forbes days, to enhance the walls and shelves.

Mementos can be sent to the 343RS at 101 Washington Sq., Suite 203, Offutt AFB, NE, 68113.



55TH WING FLYOVER

The *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* on 24 August 2019 provided an RC-135V/W aircraft and crew from Offutt AFB, NE, to perform a flyover for a NASCAR event at Elkhart Lake, WI.

The low altitude flyby happened exactly when the National Anthem was being played to the appreciation of the several thousand spectators.

Road America General Manager **Mike Kertscher** said, "The flyover was one of the most memorable moments of the race weekend, and we were honored to welcome the USAF 55th Wing."

John Ewert, Communications Director for Road America, added in a 26 August e-mail to the **Wing**: "On behalf of all of us at Road America, THANK YOU for the tremendous flyover prior to the NASCAR 180 race at Road America last Saturday. We had an amazing, crowd, tremendous weather and the performance was incredible!" *(Photo provided by Ewert via 55th Wing PA.)*

The on-ground coordinator for the flight path and all things NASCAR was 55th Ops Group Stand/Eval division chief, **LtCol Tom Jones**.

The crew was led by aircraft commander **Major Justin Cadwell**, also Stan/Eval, and it was his final



flight before leaving the Air Force (*nice way to go out*); precision navigation by **Major Brian Wershing**; aircraft crew chief was **TSgt Brad Newcomb**. The flyover was part of a regular training mission with a volunteer crew to fly on a Saturday.

(Edited from a news release provided by alert Association member Vito Spadaro, and follow-on e-mails sent by 55th Wing Public Affairs Director Ryan Hansen. Kudos to both.)

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55TH ALUM ONWARD AND UPWARD

Major General Andrea Tullos took command of 2nd Air Force at Keesler AFB, MS, on 29 August 2019. That unit oversees basic military training and technical training for most of the Air Force. She assumed her promotion commensurate with that assignment.



Then-Colonel Tullos was the 55th Mission Support Group commander at Offutt, July 2011-July 2013. During her tenure, she was an avid supporter of the **Association**, became a member and currently remains so.

A distinguished graduate of Officer Training School in 1991, she is a career security services officer. Her most recent assignment was Director of Security Forces, Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Engineering and Force Protection, HQ US Air Force, the Pentagon, Arlington, VA.

(Official AF news release and photo with added info by Moore.)

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NEWSLETTER INPUTS ENCOURAGED AND WELCOME

Yes, we are aware that these newsletters tend to be Offutt-centric. It is where stuff happens.

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 3. 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 in.

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

Letters, articles, photos, and other items in this issue are examples.

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

Also welcome would be any suggestions on how to improve these issues to better inform the membership, so that they do not become stale, which is this editor's biggest concern.

What would you like to see or read more about,..... or less of? Just lemme know.

Thanks, and Videmus Omnia, Max.

(Graphic by Patricia Gros, friend of the Association.) (Ed. note: The image is dated, but so am I; however, I have long ago upgraded to a flat screen monitor and ergonomic keyboard.)

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OFFUTT AREA 55TH ROMEO BREAKFAST CLUB

Offutt area alumni of the 55th SRW, and friends, have been meeting every week for well over 25 years. Although days and locations have



changed over the years, the group convened each Tuesday morning for many years at *The Lodge*, a rustic bar and grill in La Platte, NE, just a few clicks south of the airbase.

The group is affectionately known as the **ROMEO** (Retired Old Men Eating Out) Breakfast Club, AKA: the **TM55RCCB**, (Tuesday Morning **55th** Retirees Commanders Call Breakfast), simply referred to as “The Breakfast”.

However, that situation changed last June. The original Lodge owners were **Carol Strazclas** and her brother **Eddie Krajicek**. Eddie passed away in 2017 leaving Carol to run things. She frankly was worn out after eighteen months of keeping the place going for breakfast, lunch and dinners, seven days a week with not enough staffing.

The March 2019 historic flood that hit Offutt wiped out a favorite area eatery east of there, Catfish Lake, never to recover. The owner decided to buy the Lodge from Carol, but he was not open to serving breakfast.

So, the group relocated to the food court in the Hy Vee Supermarket at the Shadow Lake Shopping Center near 72nd Street in Papillion.

Many **55th** alums know of the meetings, so any out-of-towners who want to show face, now need to be aware of the new arrangement.



Clockwise from left: Dave Patton, Dick Harriman, Ron Strong, Jim Arbuckle, a stealthy Mick Vinckier (take my word for it), John Johnson, Ham Kennedy, Mike Tabler, Hank Rieden, Fred Schapker, Bob Robeson, Steve Stevens, Kathy and Roland Saenz. John Tresemer was a late arrival.

(Photo by Moore, taken 24 September 2019)

Besides those pictured, some regular to occasional attendees are: Jim Thomas, Jim Maloney, **Carl Diver**, **Gene Murphy**, Mike Cook, **Dan Peterson**, **Roger Craig**, **Dick Brown**, **Frank Hicks**, **Mike Wise**, **Rich Clark**, Chris Canada, Don Kelly, and **Reg Urschler**, among others.

(Basic article provided by Maloney with updated material and edits by Moore.)

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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 and camaraderie in the **55th** spirit.

For information on **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. His cohort is Trish Seinwill, pseinwill@yahoo.com. Pass your contact information to either of them.

Ricky and Trish are considering a wine tasting in the Piedmont area of Virginia this fall or winter.

Emery Breznai and **Jeanette Rivera-Breznai** will host a **55th Wing** alumni social and dinner Saturday, 19 October. Full report in next issue.

If you know of any former *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth’ers* in the DC/VA/MD region who is **not currently** receiving **55th Wing Association** information, let Ricky or Trish know, or provide contact information for those persons, and one of them will make sure they get an **Association** membership form and the information they need to become connected.

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SAN ANTONIO LUNCH BUNCH

This alumni ‘chapter’ remains active. **Charlie McBride** and **Dave Frutchey** report, they gather the **second** Thursday each month, 1200 hours, and at TGI Fridays, McCullough and Loop 410.

Numbers vary at each monthly gathering, but 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.



Nasty Ned Gates in front.

Standing L to R: Frutchey, Mike Morris, Ron Nickerson, Bill White, McBride, Bruce Barker, Jim Hilliard.

(Taken 12 September, provided by McBride.)

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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. Some groups meet for breakfast or lunch regularly, others the occasional dinner with spouses.

(Hello, Greenville, TX, and Dayton, OH, what say you?!?)

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EC-135 RESTORATION UPDATE

The Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum is a projected five year, \$250,000 project, on EC-135C Aircraft 38049.

The ultimate goal is to restore the plane internally to its original status when it flew the last *Looking Glass* mission in 1990. The bird was **the** high time EC with 29,151.2 airborne hours.

The Museum staff has worked with consultants and completed a Redevelopment Plan for what the Museum intends to do in the next five years or so.

The plan has been approved by the Museum’s Board of Directors, and is being followed with fundraising prior to the plan being made public.

The final positioning of 049 within the Museum, and the exhibits related to 049, are part of that plan. The Museum’s schedule is to complete the redevelopment project between 2025 and 2027, with Hangar A being the first part of the project.

Several aircraft will need to be repositioned to provide space for 049’s final prominent location in Hangar A. *(Without wings/engines due to space limitations.)*

The Museum ended tours of the aircraft when restoration had progressed to where visitors interfered with safety and the orderly reinstallation of equipment. The Museum must protect the outstanding work of its restorers by making sure that a complete and uncontaminated aircraft is available for many years, and to tell the story of the crewmember’s dedication and service in providing deterrence for the United States against a nuclear war during the Cold War.

The volunteer crews continue to work on the outside of the aircraft by sanding the fuselage. Some corrosion still needs to be repaired on the lower fuselage and landing gear.

The Museum staff intends to test paint the exterior starting in November. The Museum has reconnected with the PPG paint company and it has renewed its pledge to provide primer and paint for the exterior.



*Just some of the stalwart volunteers
Taken earlier this year.*

The restoration team will update the list of equipment missing from the aircraft when the plane was transferred to the Museum. That list will be used by the volunteers to attempt to find that equipment. The team has located, and the Museum

will soon receive, some needed equipment that was transferred to the Navy E-6Bs from the EC-135Cs.

The volunteers also request that any former crewmembers who have Sergeant and Greenleaf combination locks to consider donating the locks to the Museum by first contacting **Hank Carriger** at email: henrycarriger@gmail.com.

So far, the dedicated restorers have worked almost 30,000 hours the aircraft. The Museum has collected donations of \$105,753 specifically for restoring 049, and has expended \$70,845.

Donations may be sent 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.

Since work has slowed on 049 pending implementation of the Redevelopment Plan, there are no new pictures with this newsletter. The latest Facebook update was 30 April 2019.

Photos posted on sites were taken by the volunteers. If you like what you see, please express your appreciation in your Facebook comments.

The pictures of the project's progress from day-one are posted to the following Facebook sites:

SAC ACC (Strategic Air Command–Airborne Command and Control), 4 ACCS PACCS, LOOKING GLASS (SAC ABNCP) AND PACCS, FANS OF STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND SAC, and SAC VETERANS

*(Updated material provided by **Hank Carriger**, Volunteer Coordinator, Boerne, TX. From e-mail 25 September 2019. Numbers data provided by **Jeff Cannon**, President/CEO, Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum.)*

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TAPS



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FAKE, James P., 75, 28 June 2019, Altamonte Springs, FL; wife of 42 years, **Kyung**. After a Vietnam tour in F-105 Wild Weasels, Jim served in the **55th** at Offutt as an RC-135 EWO 1972-77. In retirement he became an AF Junior ROTC instructor at high schools in Maryland, New Jersey and Florida. He will be interred at Arlington National Cemetery on 20 November at 1300 hours.

HILL, Robert, June 2019, San Antonio, TX. He was an RB-47 EWO in the **55th** at Forbes AFB, KS, in the 1960s. *(Only info provided.)*

HOWARD, Russell G. III, 84, 14 September 2019, Port Charlotte, FL; Russ, a native of Pennsylvania, was an EWO in RC-135s serving in the 6th Strat Wing at Eielson AFB, AK, and in the **55th** at Offutt. He retired after 22 years active duty.

LARSON, Betty Ann, 84, 24 September 2019. Alden, IA. Widow of **Loren** to whom she was married for 58 years. He was an RC-135 navigator at Kadena and Offutt who passed in September 2014. Betty was an Iowa farm girl who became an RN who served as the Director of Nursing at Scenic Manor in Iowa Falls for several years.

MERIDETH, Patricia, 73, 7 October 2019; Mililani, HI; widow of **Larry**, an RC-135 pilot in the **55th SRW** at Offutt, on staff at Mildenhall RAF, UK, and with PACAF at Hickham AFB, HI. He passed in October 2004. Pat was a devoted Air Force wife and supported Larry's career. In Hawaii she worked for many years in a bank loan department. They were married 36 years.

MEYER, John H., 82, 24 May 2019, Silver Spring, MD; wife of 54 years, **Jeanne**. He was an RC-135 EWO in the 82nd at Kadena in the late 1960s. Taught celestial at the USAF Academy, then came to the **55th SRW** as a crew member, then in RC crew scheduling. Spent five years in Hawaii in intelligence, then to NSA in the Pentagon for several years. He will be interred at Arlington at a date TBD.

MICHAEL, Alan, 82, 23 September 2018, Phoenix, AZ; wife of 54 years, **Peggy**. Al was an RC-135 EWO in the 343rd at Offutt in the 1970s. He was the EWO team scheduler before going PCS to Shemya AB, AK, for a year. Follow-on tour was on staff with the 9th SRW at Beale AFB, CA, before retiring, when they were full time RV'ers for years.

SCHOONOVER, Brunhilde (Hilde), 89, 25 May 2019, Spokane, WA. The wife of **Frank**, a navigator in the **55th SRW** RB-47s at Forbes AFB, KS, and RC-135s at Offutt, 1964-68. They were married 64 years. Born in Czechoslovakia, she and her family survived WWII and the devastation of post-war Europe before she came to the US as a displaced person.

ST AMANT, Anthony L., 80, 4 July 2019, Chico, CA; married to **Lynne** for 59.5 years. Tony was a tanker pilot before going to the 82nd SRS at Kadena AB, Okinawa, 1970-72. He subsequently commanded the 70th Air Refueling Sqd at Grissom AFB, IN, and then the 100th Air Refueling Wing at Beale AFB, CA. In retirement he was the Deputy Administration Officer for Butte County, CA, for many years.

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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.

*It is **not** an imperative that the departed be a member of the Association. If one has any relevant connection to **55th** history, they will be remembered.*

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 (crewmember, maintenance, communications) will be helpful.

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

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TAPS ON THE ASSN WEB SITE

The **TAPS** section has a listing for access to the names and dates of those in the **55th** family who have passed. **There is a search box to quickly find names.**

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 webmaster to do so.

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

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COLD WAR MEMORIAL UPKEEP

The Plea has been answered. (With a 'nudge' from our Peerless Leader, Spy V.)

After 16 years of dedicated and diligent attention to maintaining the grooming of the **55th** Cold War Monument and memorial patio, **Jack Kovacs** and **Larry LaFlair** are officially relieved of duty, and a well earned respite. They have 'passed the torch' to a new generation of caretakers.

Jack met with the group on 10 September at the Memorial Gardens of the National Museum of the Air Force to relate what needs to be monitored.

The museum staff does not do any maintenance of monuments. They mow the grass.

The new team includes **Steve Ling, Tim Spaeth, Steve Bland, Carl Edmiston, Jack Franz, David Snow, Perry Peloquin, Mark Goff, and CMSgt Phil Fischer.**

This stalwart band has willingly taken the reins.

After the handoff, Perry made the comment, "The most obvious observation one will make is that it will take **nine** of us to fill the shoes of **two**. Be assured this is a team sport."



Pictured 19 September, L-R: Peloquin, Bland, Franz, Kovacs, a stealthy Goff, Snow, Fischer.

(Photo provided by Peloquin,

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Ling added these words: “Thanks, Max, for getting the ball rolling on this. I am now officially part of the Dayton **55th** team. I had the great pleasure to meet and spend time with Jack Kovacs. What an honor!!”

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Here is Jack’s input:

Joe, It’s done! The monument caretaker job has been officially turned over to a new team. We met at the monument site and did it.

I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with that group of *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* guys who will be taking care of the Cold War memorial from now on.

After spending about a half an hour or so, with them, and listening to them already discussing plans for its care, **I feel confident that the memorial is in good hands and will always be one of the showpiece monuments in Memorial Gardens.**

In spite of the difference in our generations, it didn’t take long for me to feel a brotherhood with those guys.

Also, when I see the rare articles in the media of a MiG buzzing one of the **55th’s** RC-135s, I brag a bit to my friends: "that's my old outfit still on the job."

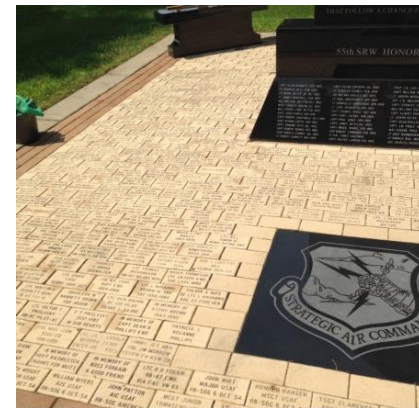
Regards and VO, keep me in touch,
Jack Kovacs, Fairborn, OH.

(From a series of e-mails 10 through 14 September 2019)

This is just an example of Jack’s and Larry’s work:

BEFORE

AFTER



Many **Association** members know of Jack Kovacs’ years of dedicated service on projects to which the organization has been at the forefront.

For those who do not, or as a refresher for others, here is a recap of articles previously covered in past issues of *Videmus Omnia*.

His location in Fairborn, OH, has given him (and the **Association**) the opportunity and advantage to be on-the-spot to apply his diligence.

When the USAF Museum received an RB-47H (tail #4299) previously assigned to the **55th SRW** at Forbes AFB, KS, that had sat neglected for decades at Salina, KS, (being passed off as a bomber) it was dilapidated, deteriorated, and in pieces.



Jack was there to see it arrive at the Museum in 1998. Over the next five years, he was at the Museum restoration shop almost daily to assist the crew in any way he could, including physical, hands-on grunt work. The workers were pleased to have a volunteer who had actually piloted that very aircraft.

It rolled out in March 2003 in pristine condition.



Larry (left) and Jack at the monument. Photo taken juuuuusssst a few years ago.
(This and patio shots provided by Kovacs.)

That plane became the centerpiece of the Museum's Cold War Annex.



Jack's second years' long involvement was with the **55th SRW** Cold War Monument. From the design planning in 2001, through the construction phase, until its dedication in September 2003, he had critical in-person coordination with Dodds Monuments (the memorial builder) and the Museum staff.

While then-**Association** President **Bill Ernst** was in continual oversight contact, and made numerous trips to Dayton, Jack was there for any and all decisions, and when immediate attention was needed.

He also planned and orchestrated the largest **55th** reunion in history at Wright Pat/Dayton in September 2003, the highlight of which was the dedication of the Monument.

Over 700 **55th'ers** and friends attended four days of events.

In addition, Jack's detailed planning guide and thorough after-action report have served as the best examples on how to plan and execute a reunion.

Of course, his dedication did not end when the memorial came to fruition and the reunion was history. His stewardship, along with that of his faithful sidekick Larry LaFlair, has been routinely documented by his reports in issues of the *Videmus Omnia* over the past 16 years.

John 'Jack' Kovacs' multiple contributions can be described in one word – **unmatched**.

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Always be yourself, because the people who matter don't mind, and the ones who do mind, don't matter.

THE HISTORIC OFFUTT FLOOD AND RECOVERY STORY

*Basic article and photos contributed by
Mo Krishna, Technical Director, 55th Wing
NEXGEN Program Management Office,
1 October 2019*

The *Ides of March* 2019 began normally for an early spring day. In the scheduling office, we were tracking the weather for potential aircraft relocations and talking about our weekend plans. But by mid-morning, the Ops Group began planning for potential flooding as rain and warmer weather continued and multiple rivers began to swell.

The 2018-2019 winter had unusually heavy snowfalls and there was still a foot of snow on the frozen ground, when the unseasonably high temperatures turned what could have been a late snowfall into rain.

Predictions of flooding similar to 2011 put the **Wing** into action on Friday evening and Saturday (16-17 March) filling and placing sandbags around buildings on the south side of base, and erecting large wire-reinforced sandbag barriers around the satellite communications facility.

In 2011, Offutt flooded on the south side of base in low lying areas near the fence line, but did not affect any buildings or other structures.

The 2019 disaster turned out nothing like 2011. With frozen ground not absorbing much water, and three waterways (Missouri, Platt, Papio) over flood stage, Saturday morning brought significant flooding.

The **55th Wing** flushed flyable aircraft on Friday and Saturday, and moved all non-flyable aircraft to the upper/west parking ramp.

Saturday saw a flurry of activity as Maintenance Group personnel relocated equipment and vehicles to higher ground, and people moved critical equipment and paperwork either above the predicted two to three feet flood level, or to other areas, and worked until the levy breached.

After the 2011 flood, Nebraska decided to raise the levy surrounding Offutt by three feet with the work to begin in the spring of 2019. The levy that breached was outside the Offutt levy, but that breach allowed the levy protecting Offutt to be overtopped by four and a half feet.

At about 1430 on Saturday afternoon, Security Forces sent teams to clear all low lying areas as the water began to rise significantly.

Mike Hoskins was in the **Wing** headquarters rescuing the Hall of Fame plaques and significant items from the **Wing** historian's office when a Security Forces airman ordered him to leave for his own safety. The call to evacuate came in time to prevent any loss of life.

The rush of water didn't give enough time to protect or evacuate significant facilities such as the Security Forces headquarters, the **55th** Intelligence Support Squadron with \$200M of mission equipment and simulators, and the E-4 hangar and alert facility.

What later was rated as a 500+ year flood could never have been prevented nor foreseen.

Over 700 airman filled more than 400,000 sandbags which could not stop over 720 million gallons of water from flooding 2,500 acres, 1.2 million square feet in 137 facilities. 3,000 feet of the 11,700 foot runway were underwater, and over 3,200 personnel were displaced. Lots of numbers to say that this was a devastating flood of historic (*biblical?*) proportions.



But no one died or was injured, no planes were lost, and the **Wing's** worldwide mission did not stop. About 10 days after the flood began, the runway was open and aircraft began to return home.

During a visit to Offutt to observe the flood effects and recovery efforts, then-Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson commented, "Even Mother Nature cannot stop the **55th Wing.**"

We are over six months into the recovery and have received help and interest from all levels of government to include congressman and senators from Nebraska and neighboring states.

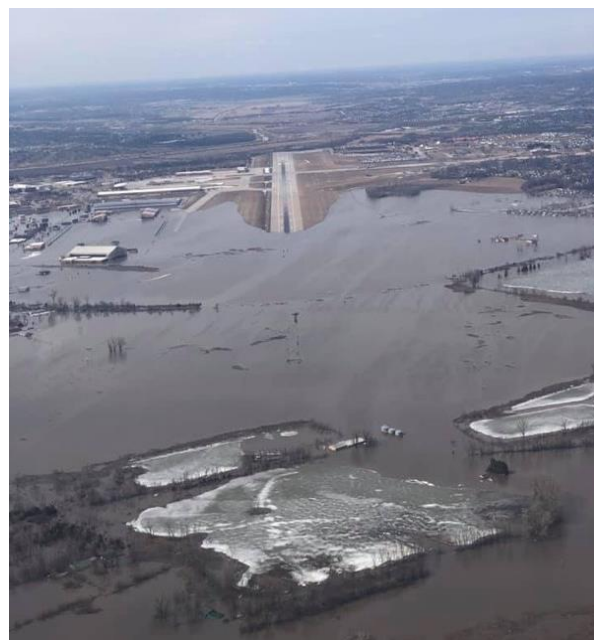
So far, over \$88M in initial repair funds have been received to clean up and renovate facilities that are from reasonable to habitable condition, such as the Bennie Davis Maintenance Facility, the E-4 hangar, and the NAOC alert facility.

Most other facilities in and around the **Wing** headquarters are not recoverable.

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After the Tyndall AFB, FL, hurricane, the Air Force Installation Management Command recommended that any facility that had more than five feet of water for a week were not worth repairing.

For scale, when then-**Wing** commander, Colonel Manion, was taken by boat around the flooded areas, the depth finder indicated 11 feet in the **55th** Security Force building parking lot. All of the mission equipment and mission simulators in the building were a total loss with \$234 million replacement estimate.



From the Missouri River breach looking westward. Runway top-center. The E-4 hangar is in upper left-center.

The BIG SAFARI office jumped into action right after the flood and provided a mission area and

maintenance “band aid” simulators from spares and available equipment. Once the budget money flows, BIG SAFARI will be able to backfill the spares and replace the remainder of the equipment. The RC- “front end” simulators didn’t get as much damage and were operational within six weeks of the flood waters receding.

RECONSTRUCTION PLANS

The reconstruction has been organized into eight “campuses” to help facilitate similar functions, and to divide the work into right-sized pieces. The Air Staff decided to include the top three campuses into the FY19 spending plan, so the Alert Campus, Satellite Communications Campus, and the Multi-Domain Operations Campus (read Ops Group) have all officially started.

Designs for the campuses (cost estimate \$360 Million) will begin in October, so that when the military construction money for the remaining five campuses (Security Forces, Flight Line, Logistics Readiness, Base Lake, Power MircoGrid) is available we can move forward. In the meantime, the 3,200 displaced people are scattered and stuffed in to various buildings around base.

The 45th Reconnaissance Squadron now shares space with the 38th and 343d Reconnaissance Squadrons on the upper level of their historic building on the northeast end of the parade grounds. Those bed-downs displaced the 55th Contracting Squadron, which is now in Building C along with many other relocated residents.

The 55th Security Forces Squadron’s 500+ airman and sailors are dispersed around the base in the hangar east of base operations, in several rooms in Building D (former Martin Bomber Plant), the confinement facility (read: oldest operating jail west of the Mississippi), and soon to be in several converted dorm rooms.

The 97th Intelligence Squadron (400+ airman) has jammed into secure facilities in Building D and has recently reduced from three shifts to two shifts to continue their intelligence analysis and production work.

The 55th Maintenance Group works out of habitable areas in the Bennie Davis facility as well as setting up folding tables and chairs in the former Patriot Club (former O-Club, former all-ranks club) ballroom and dining room, (but **not** the Raider’s

Lounge, which hasn’t miss a beat for evening camaraderie); and several billeting rooms in other facilities.

The pieced together mission and maintenance simulators have been installed in the former Air Force Weather Agency SCIF (secure facility) as well as more secure working space for the 97th and 1st ACCS.

With the move of STRATCOM from Building 500 (General Curtis LeMay Building) to the new Building 1000, has facilitated some of the **Wing** command section offices moving into areas in the building on the hilltop.

This is just a sample of how fortunate we were to have space available/moldable to meet the various unit requirements, and for airman to be able to continue the mission in less than optimum circumstances.

Today, as always, the 55th continues to support Combatant Commanders around the world with world class, reliable reconnaissance.

The rebuilding process will take several years to complete, but the silver lining is that we have a clean slate to design facilities that match the evolving mission. Offutt and the 55th Wing may look disheveled and ragged today, but watch for reported progress in future issues of the VO.

As the bulldozers begin to knock down the damaged 55th buildings, Next Generation of the **Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth** will take shape and keep the US ahead of adversaries as the Combatant Commanders have come to expect from us.

*The Sun Never Sets and Flood Waters Can’t Deter the **Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth**.*

(Edited and added material by Moore.)

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55th WING IS SELECTED 2019 DOOLITTLE AWARD WINNER

*Contributed by **Bill Strandberg***

Following discussions with many former 55th and Big Safari members at the Air Force Association Convention, here is information on the Air Force Historical Foundation’s (AFHF) selection of the 55th Wing as the **James H. Doolittle Award** winner for 2019. **This award recognizes the most outstanding US Air Force unit for the year.**

As a past serving member of the Board of Directors for the AFHF, I have lobbied for a number of years to see the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* recognized with the Doolittle Award.

Finally! Success in 2019!

A quote from those who know:

“This is a big deal!”

The AFHF announcement states this award is for "...a unit that has displayed bravery, determination, discipline, *esprit de corps* and superior management of joint operations in multiple conflicts."

The Doolittle Award was established by the Foundation in 2011 and first awarded to the 4th Fighter Wing, Seymour-Johnson AFB, NC.

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At the Air Force Memorial in Arlington, VA, on 8 October 2019, a perfect autumn afternoon under a sunny and blue sky, the **55th Wing** was honored with the presentation of the James H. Doolittle Award.

The ceremony was orchestrated by LtGen (Ret) **Christopher Miller**, Chairman and President of the Air Force Historical Foundation. He handed the plaque to Colonel Gavin Marks, commander of the **55th Wing**.

Participating in the ceremony was a contingent of six other active duty members of the **55th Wing**, including Wing Command Chief Brian Thomas, plus about twenty past members of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*.



Colonel Marks and Chief Thomas at center-front with the 55th active duty contingent. At far left is former 55th CC, BrigGen (Ret) Larry Mitchell, and at far right-rear is another past Wing CC, MajGen (Ret) TC Jones. An assorted group of 55th alumni fills in the background of the photo.

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Past units have used the presentation ceremony at the USAF Memorial as a showcase for members of the honored unit. For example, the 100th Wing, RAF Mildenhall, UK, had 20 members present. Last year's unit, the 1st Fighter Wing, Langley AFB, VA had over 50 active duty personnel at the Memorial, due to its close proximity.

The representation from the **55th Wing** was significant, led by **55th Wing** Commander Colonel Marks, **55th Wing** Command Chief Thomas.



L-R: MSgt Steven Wall, Capt Keith Saylor, SrAmn Justin Sirles, SSgt Thomas Wilson, Capt Logan Williams, Chief Thomas, Colonel Marks.

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There was reception and awards banquet that evening at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, VA.

The Air Force Chief of Staff (CSAF), **General David Goldfein**, and his wife, attended the awards banquet, as did former Air Force Chiefs **Generals** (Retired) **Nortie Schwartz** and **John Jumper**, and their wives, Jumper as an honoree.

The sitting CSAF does not always attend the annual awards banquet and I consider his presence an indication of his interest in all the honorees, including the **55th Wing**.

A robust cadre of **55th Wing Association** members helped to make the event a sellout. Attendees included: President Spivey, Vice Pres McMahon and wife **Cary**, Secretary Trish and **Jeff** Seinwell, **John Cooper**, Wolf and **Joan** Samuel, **Buz** and **Nancy Carpenter**, Tom and **Sherrie** Andersen, BrigGen (Ret) Larry Mitchell (Wing Commander, June 1986-May 1988), **Dan** and **Kelley Moy**, **Bill Jensen** (a former Wing CV), Val and **Laura Dugie**, **Past Association President Bill**

Ernst, Bill and Ann Strandberg, and Dave Erteschik.

Other 55th alumni or associates who were there included MajGen (Ret) **TC and Mrs. Jones (Wing Commander, August 2002-October 2003), MajGen (Ret) Jim Poss, Pat Flood, Colonel Brian Sidari, Sean Harrington, LtCol Alexa Quandt, MarCi Buttie, Stuart Latta, Jim Henning, and Mike Meermans, President, BIG SAFARI Association.**



L-R: Spy V, Coop, Erteschik, Ricky Mac and Cary, bringing her grace and charm to an otherwise (insert adjective) group.

AFHF Chairman and President LtGen (Ret) **Christopher Miller**, who was the emcee, in his opening remarks, asked the assembled 55th'ers to stand and be recognized. He also stated, "You can tell a lot about a wing by how members support it after they leave."

Both he and General Goldfein commented how they were impressed by the number of alumni attending.

(This is also a testament to why the 55th Wing Association exists. Kudos to Bill, Trish, and Spy V for sounding the klaxon to urge attendance. Max)

Colonel Marks was seated at the head table with a galaxy of (four) stars, literally. In his acceptance statements he mentioned being a tad intimidated.

He also gave unqualified credit to the dedicated men and women of the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** who had earned the Doolittle award, adding that he was humbled to represent them.

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The 2019 awards also honored General John Jumper, as the year's honoree with the **General Carl "Tooney" Spaatz Award** for outstanding career-long contributions; and Dr. R. Cargill Hall

with the **Major General J. B. Holley Award** as the outstanding historian for his decades of contributions to USAF history documentation.

Dr. Hall, while serving as the National Reconnaissance Office Historian, was instrumental in declassifying and recognizing the contributions of both USAF and USN veterans who flew reconnaissance missions over "denied territory" during the early years of the Cold War, including those of the 55th SRW, during over flights of northern Soviet Union (OPERATION HOMERUN).

There were additional awards presented by the AFHF to authors of the most outstanding air power history article, and the best air power history book of 2018.

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This was certainly a great all around recognition for the past history of the 55th, from P-38s and P-51s of the 55th **Fighter Group** fighting in the skies over Germany; the early reconnaissance missions during the Korean War; the long hours and missing crews of the Cold War; and the fantastic job continuously fighting the many conflicts from Desert Storm/Desert Shield in 1991, to the present; by providing the critical reconnaissance and electronic combat support worldwide.

(Bill is a former 55th RC navigator and a long time Association member. He currently serves as Artifact Curator, Center for the Study of National Reconnaissance, National Reconnaissance Office in Chantilly, VA. He and Ann reside in Vienna, VA)

(Basic article from e-mails 16-17 September; additional material 10-12 October from Bill, Trish, Wolf, Moore, and edited by Moore.)

All photos provided by Jeff Seinwell.)

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Here is Wolf Samuel's personal observation.

Yesterday evening (9 October) Joan and I had the privilege of attending a banquet at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, VA, hosted by the AFHF (**Jim Vertenten**, in charge of the event.)

The 55th **Wing**, successor to my former 55th **Strategic Reconnaissance Wing** during the Cold War years, was honored with the Doolittle award for 2019, a well earned recognition. I met its current commander, Colonel Gavin Marks, who, in

his comments, made sure the credit went to the men and women of the 55th.

My dear friend, Dr Cargill Hall (*with plaque*) was honored for a lifetime contribution to the documentation of Air Force history. In plain English, no one did more to open up to the American public the secret world of Cold War reconnaissance than Cargill. I could not have done my recent book, *Silent Warriors*, without his immense contribution and help.



Cargill’s brief, but poignant, acceptance ended with ‘always take the bull, not by the horns, but by the tail’.

There were many friends to share the evening with: **Gene Dietrich**, Buz Carpenter, among many, and **Heather “Lucky” Penney**. It had been a long time since I first met Heather, a true symbol of American courage. It was good to meet her again so unexpectedly.

Heather, an F16 pilot, when the call came to put her life on the line, she did so without hesitation. (*Then a 25 year old 1Lt with the DC Air National Guard, she and her commander, Colonel Marc Sasseville, launched on 11 Sept 2001 without any armament in their aircraft, and if necessary, would have had to ram United Flight 93, a hi-jacked airliner. Max*)

I also had the opportunity to meet with General Goldfein and shake his hand. His introductory remarks about General Jumper, who was honored with the 2019 Spaatz Award, were humorous, yet fully recognized General Jumper’s immense and lasting contributions in building today’s Air Force.

Although the Air Force faces many challenges, I walked away from this event assured that we have the best possible leadership we could ask for.

Go **55th**, and go Air Force, beat Army and Navy! (*Oops. Navy beat Air Force on Saturday, 5 October, while the Class of 1969 was having a reunion there. Max.*)

Wolf Samuel, Fairfax Station, VA
(*From an e-mail 19 October*)

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Bill S: “Hey! I want that plaque!”

Trish: “No! Its mine!”

Spy V said, “I was an eye witness!!”

(So was the dude in the back.)

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REUNIONS

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**55th WING “Old Pueblo”
ROUNDUP & REUION
APRIL 2021 (or OCTOBER 2020)
WE ARE WORKING IN IT, NOW**



Plans are officially underway for the 34th **55th Wing Roundup & Reunion** in Tucson, Arizona, aka “*The Old Pueblo*”.

The **55th Wing Association** for the first time is working with an organization specializing in planning reunions and events for veteran’s groups/associations – The Reunion BRAT. Their personnel will do the majority of the event planning to include hotel bookings and site visits. BRAT comes highly recommended and has a long list of past events that have received rave reviews (B-47 Assn, DFC Society, BIG SAFARI Assn, et al.).

The Roundup will also be the first opportunity for attendees to interact with the **55th Electronic**

Combat Group at Davis-Monthan AFB, which has been part of the **55th Wing** since October 2002.

The group and its five squadrons (three flying, an ops support sqd, and a maintenance sqd) have a distinguished history and are looking forward to welcoming current and former **55th Wing** members/personnel to Tucson to experience the local Southwestern hospitality.



As a reminder, the event is planned by the **55th Wing Association** and is open to all current and past personnel assigned to the **55th Wing** and its predecessors.

Everyone and anyone with any history with the ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*** (family, widows, friends, associates, and supporters) are invited, and are more than welcome to attend the reunion events.

We are currently in the process of selecting the hotel where our activities will be based.

Tentative dates targeted are in **April 2021**, after Easter, as our **primary**, and **alternate dates in mid-October 2020** depending on the hotel availability, and to avoid the high tourist season.

Make a note to start planning and we hope to have solid dates and other information in time for the next newsletter (*circa Feb-Mar*).

If the basic info (hotel and dates) becomes known before that, the word will be posted on the Association web site (55wa.org) and sent via 'flash' messages far and wide.

Potential events include tours and visiting several popular sites and attractions unique to the Tucson area.

We are also looking at a different approach to the **Association** golf outing, possibly hosted at Top Golf, which has a climate-controlled environment to provide a wide range of entertainment for group events, luxury simulator experiences, and golf ball tracing technology, to video games, and original content services.

Top Golf can also support a tournament venue welcome to all playing levels, while being able to relax in a "family sports bar" environment. Folks have a choice of participating in the "tournament"

or sit back and "watch the action". So for the first time ever the players could have a live audience!

We will also plan on a **55th All Call** with the active duty troops that we hope will include tours of an RC-135 from Offutt, and an EC-130 COMPASS CALL aircraft at D-M.



Coordination for base access on the tour buses may require some additional information from attendees, but we will work through the details.

The **most favorable** times to visit Tucson are April to May, and September to October. Those seasons offer pleasant weather and reasonable room rates. Winter's sunny skies and comfortable temperatures attract thousands of northerner 'snowbirds' seeking warmer solace.

The summer months offer spectacular hotel discounts, but temperatures often hover in the triple digits (*but it is dry heat, noted cliché*), making outdoor activities uncomfortable.

Hence, the dates we are looking at for the Roundup Reunion. The daytime weather should be accommodating for outdoor events and pleasantly cool in the evenings. All in all, it should be a great time to re-connect with former colleagues, friends, and squadron mates, while also experiencing the Southwestern charm and hospitality of the Wing brethren at the **55th Electronic Combat Group**.

More details and information to follow as soon as event dates are confirmed.

As the locals say.. '*Bienvenidos el Tucson!*'
Looking forward to seeing you all there.

(Basic article contributed by Val Dugie, Reunion, Chairman, member Board of Directors, Tucson native. Edited by Moore, who else?)

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*It is said there is a highway to hell
and a stairway to heaven,
which says a lot about the anticipated traffic.*

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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.

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



(Photo by Sargent.)

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

Give a big hint to the family, and maybe some generous loved one will give you a gift for whatever you have going: Mother's Day, 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, available in sizes medium, large, XL, and XXL. **The cost of the current stock is \$35 each.**

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

Sales were brisk at the April reunion.

* * * * *

The golf/baseball caps have 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, now at a flat rate of \$7.00.

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

In the future more items, such as ball point pens, hot cups, coffee mugs, etc., will be available with the **Association** logo emblazoned thereon.

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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.

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There is a web site set-up with a vast assortment of items and colors that members can order with the **Association** logo.

Site address link is:

<https://fiftyfifthwingassociation.qbstores.com/a/login>

When you order on line, you can preview what the merchandise looks like with the **Association** dual logo, and select whatever item you want.

The site usually has a special running, and once you sign up, they will e-mail you a coupon for money off the purchase. Postage is included when you order.

The new shirts/apparel are at a substantial savings, some as low as \$22 including shipping!

For those who do not have a computer available, you will still be able to order through me via the US Postal Service.

Bill Sargent, Association Haberdasher

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ASSOCIATION TIES

Since the original supplies of the 'regimental tie' sold out over the years, by popular demand, a new batch will be ordered pending budget considerations. Price and date available are TBD.

The tie was prominent at the reunion banquet last April, and worn routinely at official and social functions at Offutt AFB.

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55TH FASHION PINS

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

Gents and ladies, it makes a great birthday or anniversary accessory gift, or holiday stocking stuffer.

(Shown actual size)

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 a **55th** Commander's Wingman, in recognition of his superior and continued community support to the **55th Wing.**

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PRO-NUN-SEE-A-SHUN

During a social encounter at the *Tales* event in February 2003, a young second lieutenant (*are there any other kind?*) from the 338th CCTS, who professed to have survived four years as a student of *Latin*, informed this editor that the correct pronunciation of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* wing motto is thus:

Wi - DAY - moose Om-nee-ah

He insisted the 'v' be pronounced as a 'w', and with a soft 'i', and emphasis on the mid-syllable and a hard 'A'. Thus, for your edification, or whatever.

However, common usage and personal preference will likely prevail in the use of 'v', as in vigilant, valiant, victorious.

(Yes, this is a repeat item for those who didn't get it in previous issues of the VO, or for any new members. Max)

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It isn't hard to meet expenses.

They are everywhere.

* * * * *

WHO SHOT WHAT

Graphics from Clip Art, and organization and public web sites. Photos not previously attributed: President Spivey and all Hall, Tales, Ball, and **55th** pin by Moore; wood scrapbooks by Hoskins; RB-47 shots provided by Kovacs.

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Videmus Omnia



55th Wing Association, Inc.

(Formerly – 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

(Contact Information 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 Dec 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

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(SORT OF)
FOR SPACING AND BECAUSE
THAT IS THE WAY IT IS ALWAYS DONE.

THE LAST PAGE HAS THE ADDRESS LABEL
**THAT IS WHERE TO CHECK YOUR SUBSCRIPTION
YEAR END DUE DATE.**

**IF IT INDICATES 2019,
NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO RENEW**



