

Videmus Omnia

55th WING

ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER

2020

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Fightin' Fifty-Fifth Alums: Surely, I am not the first you've heard say something like, "What a Year is 2020?!". Nor, doubtfully, will I be the last? Thankfully, 2020 is ALMOST in our rearview mirror. From **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** reports across the country, appears **Association** members and families remain vigilant, safe and healthy.

Who knew practical implications of **Videmus Omnia** might also apply to so many issues in one calendar year? In spite of the year's issues, your **Association** continued to survive, even thrive, in the midst of challenges. Of course, many of our successes were documented in previous "Max-Missives"; however, here are few more tidbits from the field.

As I write this "Prezgram" on the eve of Veterans Day, taking time to reflect on all our departed members honored in 2020 TAPS Roll Calls. Seems they are coming far too frequently of late; and, ever younger. Just one more reminder for us to cherish our friendships, old and new. Life is, indeed, too short!

With COVID challenges we did see a shift in your **Association's** long-observed traditions; but many were countered by like-events to somewhat compensate for lost opportunities. For example, we did not present the USAF/55th **Wing Association** wreath in this year's Omaha National Cemetery (ONC) ceremony (CNX); however, as you will see later in this newsletter, a wreath was presented at the new **Wing** Headquarters monument to commemorate Veterans Day. With the **Wing's** post-flood HQ transition, Offutt **Association** members are nvolved in some activity related to transforming

Building 500 from its SAC/USSTRATCOM décor to a **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** home nearly every week.

The focus of many of these activities is directly attributable to our historical legacy. As mentioned earlier, the ONC duplicate monument was placed in the entrance foyer. The Hall of Fame (HoF) display is now fully reestablished, including this year's inductees. (See article in July 2020 issue of VO, page 10.)

However, without a "Ball", inductees were shipped their personal plaques pending an appropriate venue to recognize them next year. Likewise, the **Association's** Award for Excellence Trophy was not presented at a Ball-like event; but presented at a retirement ceremony, to be formally re-presented at a 2021 opportunity.

The Excellence and Palm Trophies were relocated to the new Headquarters building where both are well-positioned to be seen by far more personnel, and more readily so, than previous locations.

We still not yet consummated a **Wing/CC** welcome dinner for **Colonel Gavin Marks**; which may slip to be a farewell event this time around, TBD. If able, it will likely be just before welcoming the new **Wing** Commander into the fold.

Other positive progress included additional **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** signage on Building 500. The **Wing** hosted, in October (vice July due to COVID), BIG SAFARI's annual RC-135 Program Management Review (RCPMR); successfully combining limited Dougherty Conference Center (DCC) attendance (not to exceed 25), with off-site rooms and video teleconferencing. The take away from all this? Challenges? True! But, the 55th **Wing's** "can do" spirit prevails from all corners, past and present.

Val Dugie continues to plan for our 2021 Tucson Rendezvous/Reunion; though the BIG SAFARI Association bowed out of the planned “joint” event. Your BoD also voted to shift the reunion date from April to the fall 2021 to allow for unknown COVID resolutions by supporting organizations (D-M AFB, hotels, entertainment, etc.). I am pleased to report you will see more details in Val’s portion of this newsletter; demonstrating once more the ying/yang of 2020’s “get things done” challenge.

Surely, we all need more sunshine to close out 2020; and more than ever, I am glad to know “The Sun Never Sets on the *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth*”! So, closing out right before Veterans Day, let us all remember to, “Honor Those Who Serve and Serve Those Who Do”!

Videmus Omnia, Spy V



The *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* continues to progress their efforts to create “our” unit identity for Building 500 (previously: HQ SAC, HQ USSTRATCOM and the General Curtis LeMay Building).

Over the summer all exterior STRATCOM signage was removed, including the theater entrance’s LeMay plaque; and moved to the new HQ USSTRATCOM (Building 1000, now re-designated LeMay Building; to the west across the street, on grounds previously occupied by Warrior Nine Golf Course, and west of the O’Malley Inn.).

Building 500’s theater entrance is now clearly *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* Headquarters territory



*Theater entrance in background.
Sign faces north.*

More exterior improvements are on the docket included the HQ’s frontage (Bldg 500 facing west) and static missile removal.



Creating this new post-flood/STRAT-move identity remains a labor of love and work in progress which will benefit the **55th Wing** for generations to come.

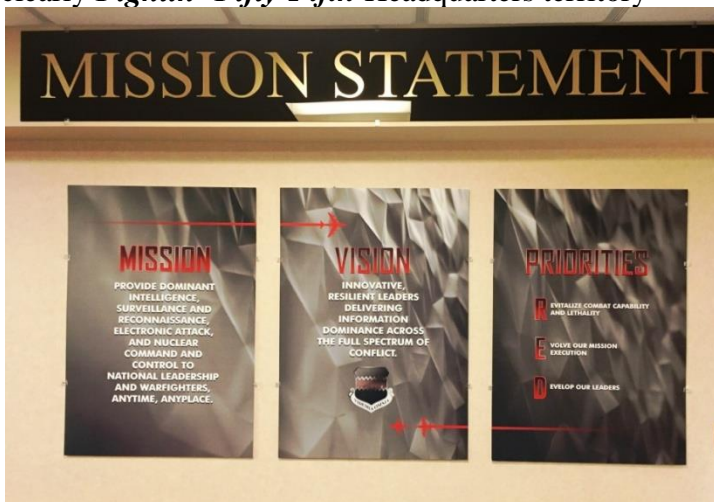
(Article contributed by Mike Hoskins, Association renovation coordinator. Photos by Coach and Mo.,)



VETERANS DAY TRIBUTE

The **Association** placed a Veterans Day wreath honoring the *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* on Monday, 9 November in the **Wing’s** new Headquarters (Building 500) lobby.

The **Association’s** *Tales of the 55th* host, **Mike (Coach) Hoskins**, represented us in the placement. Accepting on



behalf of the **Wing** was Major **Desiree (Dizzy) Bricks**, Commander's Action Group (CAG), who is the OPR for the **Wing's** Building 500 Headquarters rebranding efforts.

The monument (paid for by anonymous **Association** donors) is identical to the **Association's** Omaha National Cemetery (ONC) memorial, and will be a key part of the **Wing's** planned re-branding ribbon cutting early next year.

Both monuments honor everyone who served, now serve, or will serve, in the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth**.

Like the ONC version, this plaque includes the phrase lifted from our USAF Museum (WPAFB) Cold War monument: *"We must never forget that freedom is never really free; it is the most costly thing in the world and freedom is never paid for in a lump sum; payments come due in every generation. All any of us can do is to offer the generations that follow a chance for freedom."*

(Article and photo by **Association** President Spivey, 10 November 2020. Edited by Moore.)



55TH WING HALL OF FAME 2020

Major General Kimberly (Kim) A. Siniscalchi embodies the true spirit of the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth's** Hall of Fame. Over 30+ years of USAF service, Kim always considered the unit "home", throughout multiple assignments.

In the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing's (SRW)** Medical Group, at Offutt in August 1982; she served as a Flight, Surgical and Intensive/Critical Care Unit Nurse. In this capacity, she was rated a "shining star", foreshadowing her USAF futurer.

Kim's career path widened through successive tours with Health Care Recruiting and the USAF's DC-based Medical Center, eventually leading to the prestigious White House Nurse position. Kim followed six years of support to the President of the US by returning to the **55th Wing's** Medical



Operations Squadron as Nurse Manager and Chief of Ehrling Bergquist Regional Hospital's Medical Operations Flight, where she was rated "Best of the Best".

Leaving Offutt, for Air War College, she was later assigned a series of command positions for the USAF's Medical Logistics Office, Medical Operations Squadron, Medical Group, Training Group, as AFMC Deputy Command Surgeon and an Expeditionary Medical Group (Southwest Asia (SWA)).

In Southwest Asia, Kim actively supported combat zone aerovac missions, host-nation needs and deployed DoD patients. General Siniscalchi's final assignment in her illustrious career by being promoted from colonel to major general in the Air Force's pinnacle nursing position at HQ USAF as Assistant Surgeon General, Medical Force Development and Nursing Services. She retired from the Air Force in October 2013.

To this day, Kim is committed to preparing the nations' next generations of medical staffs, serving in key academic professorial positions throughout in the University of Texas system. General Siniscalchi's years-long service to the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** is hallmarked by a second-to-none career success, ground-breaking medical achievements and years of selfless service.

(Ed. Note: Kim is married to **Joe S+10** who was inducted in 2012 making this a unique event.)



Colonel Paul E. Fortin began a dedicated USAF career as an intelligence officer, later completing Aerial Observer and Electronic Warfare Officer (EWO) training. Colonel Fortin's initial "Raven" assignment was with the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW)**, Forbes AFB, KS, preceding the delivery of RB-47, aircrew formations and unit stand-ups.

Void of **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** flying assets, Paul and his mates developed training manuals, operations procedures, squadron stand-up needs and more, pending aircraft arrivals.



Once assigned to the 38th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Colonel Fortin's crew immediately trained for a special 2nd Air Force mission, personally directed by **General Curtis LeMay**, CINCSAC. After months preparing, Fortin deployed to Thule AFB, Greenland, making polar overflight missions of Soviet territory (OPERATION HOMERUN March-May 1956) demonstrating Strategic Air Command COLD WAR capabilities against Soviet Air Defenses, filling vital intel gaps for National Security Agency and Foreign Technology Division (FTD) analysts.

Paul later moved to the 343rd SRS as an instructor/evaluator EWO. In the 343rd, he was integral to pursuing missile testing telemetry with EB-47 TELL TWO operations from Incirlik AFB, Turkey, and high-visibility recon missions during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

After a 100+ missions tour with RB-66s in Southeast Asia, Colonel Fortin's EWO acumen and engineering achievements led to key technical positions still influencing the post-collection, analytical side of the 55th SRW mission. This included tours at FTD, AFIT, Systems Command's Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) Division, DoD's Foreign Intelligence Division and leading the Department's Weapons Laboratories.

Indeed, generations of *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* aircrew personnel and analysts owe professional gratitude to Colonel Paul Fortin's operational diversity, analytical precision and his loyalty to *Videmus Omnia*.

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Photo of the Three Mask-ateers by *TSgt Alan Alexander*, 55th Wing Command Post.

Due to COVID restrictions, no formal Hall of Fame presentation ceremony was held, but on 19 November, Colonel Gavin Marks, 55th Wing Commander (center), observed Association President Spivey and Association Board Member Mo Krishna place the newest inductees plaques on the Hall of Fame wall just outside the Wing command section.

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2020 55TH WING ASSOCIATION AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Since 2000, the 55TH Wing Association's Award for Excellence has been awarded to a *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* member best exemplifying the basic tenets of the Association: To foster and advance the ideals of patriotism, and love of country. The award also recognizes outstanding performance, professionalism, and excellence in service to the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*.

The award has honored enlisted and officer personnel from a variety of mission specialties and units; including operations, maintenance, training, protocol, medical, security forces, civil engineering and more.

This year it is an honor to have the award presented to a member of the 55th Wing Association, the 55th Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant Brian C. Thomas.



.During 2019's historic flood and the 2020 pandemic crisis, Command Chief Thomas' tireless dedication and leadership were at the forefront to protect the safety and well being of 55th Wing personnel, as well as the continuity of mission operations.

A positive role model in every way to subordinates, peers, and leaders, Command Chief Thomas clearly demonstrates the above and beyond qualities worthy of the **55th Wing Association Award for Excellence**.

The award was presented 19 November at Chief Thomas' retirement ceremony by President Spivey, at yet another restricted event.

Basic article by Spy V, edited by Moore.

Photo also by TSgt Alan Alexander,



55TH WING PERSONNEL GARNER AWARDS

Teammates (*55TH Wing Personnel*),

I am continually impressed by your unrelenting excellence in daily operations and in your leadership—from our newest members to our most senior leaders. Your MAJCOM is impressed, as well. Your hard work and excellence have resulted in the selection as one of four units in Air Combat Command (ACC) to receive the **Meritorious Unit**

Award (1 June 19 – 31 May 2020)!!
(*Announced in October 2020.*)



This award certainly recognizes your continued superb efforts; you deserve this and you should be proud, both as individuals and as a team. Yet, we all must remain focused on and dedicated to the collective efforts to continue being world-class in all that we do.

Warhawks, continue striving for excellence and you will no doubt achieve it. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed by the Air Force's highest echelons and certainly not by me.

You are world-class...and I'm so proud to be your teammate.

Colonel Gavin P. Marks
55th Wing Commander



These awards were announced last June:
Department of Defense Civilian Graphic Designer of the Year (DoD Level)

Mr. Joshua Plueger, 55th Wing Public Affairs
(*Ed. Note: Josh has designed the Birthday Ball logos for several years, among many other items.*)

2019 Chief Master Sergeant Thomas Castleman Award Winner (Air Force Level)

SSgt Oliver Vinegas, 55th Wing Staff Judge Advocate

2019 Exceptional Sexual Assault Response Coordinator of the Year (ACC Winner)

1Lt Cara Leaf, Deputy Wing SARC

2019 ACC Company Grade Officer of the Year

Capt Keith Saylor, 55th Security Forces Squadron



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TREASURER'S REPORT



As of 30 November 2020, the treasury had an account balance (rounded) of \$47,000.

A significant portion of the money in the account comes from dues paid in advance. Therefore, we must keep money in reserve for each calendar year to which the dues apply. For example, dues paid for years thru 2022 (or more) are prorated and spent through the ensuing years.

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

We do have a budget.



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.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

There were 449 members in good standing as of 30 November 2020, compared with 447 on 31 July 2020. Unfortunately, dues and too many members do expire. New members keep the count steady, but recruiting is a never ending need to keep the **Association** viable.

137 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 initiative has a payoff of exposure for the **Association**, and new active duty members to the organization, now at 21.



RECRUITING MEMBERS TO THE ASSOCIATION

This is the life blood to sustaining the **Association's** membership..

Lapsed members returning, new sign ups of folks who have not belonged in the past, etc.

When anyone recruiting new members, for those potentials who ask questions or have concerns; here are some tips to point out to those who have concerns about joining:

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

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

3) We have **no problem filling** officer slots, BoD or committees. Usually newbies 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. (Newsletter, web site, et al.)



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 to keep up with your dues.

If you are still not sure of your dues expiration date, to inquire on same, please e-mail to **Membership Chairman Mo Krishna** at **volvomo@gmail.com**, or drop him a note at the address noted in this text to get an update on your membership status.

When in doubt, send money. It will be credited toward future years. One gent is paid up to 2048!! For him, that may be a life membership.

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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PLEASE 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 and through the app.

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 ADDRESS 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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ONLINE DUES PAYMENT APP

*Contributed by **Jon Adams**,
Assistant Membership Chair*

To make **renewing or joining** the **Association** as convenient as possible, we have added a website that accepts credit or debit cards as payment options.

One can renew/join with a one year or three year membership. We had a successful trial period, and it is very easy to use and manage.

The free website can be a little finicky and doesn't display correctly if you're using Internet Explorer. If you open the website from the newer version of Internet Explorer, which is Microsoft Edge, or Google Chrome and the website will display correctly.

Here are the directions to sign up online:

To purchase/renew a one or three year membership: go online and follow these steps.

1. Go to this website: **55waonlinehelp@gmail.com** (If you are using Microsoft Office, you might need to hold down the CTRL key and click the link)
2. The one year and a three year membership options appear. Click **Shop Now** for the membership option you want.
3. Click **Join/Renew**.
4. Click **Checkout** at the bottom right of the screen.
5. Enter your information. Click **Next**.
6. Enter your payment information. Click **Next**.
7. Review your order, and then click: **SUBMIT** your order.
8. **Fill out the membership application on**

page 2 of the document and email to 55waonlinehelp@gmail.com

After you complete those steps, you will be good to go! If you have any questions, please let us know. 55waonlinehelp@gmail.com

Please note: the Association does not issue membership cards. So, your canceled check or credit card statement is your confirmation.

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ASSOCIATION WEB SITE 55wa.org

The 55wa.org web site is operating smoothly and securely.

A search box is provided to look for a name rather than scrolling through long lists on the TAPS, or dues date pages.

You can view the 55th Cold War Memorial page in the Heritage section and find the location of your (or any other) patio brick. Memory Lane has several “there I was” tales. You can submit yours.

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

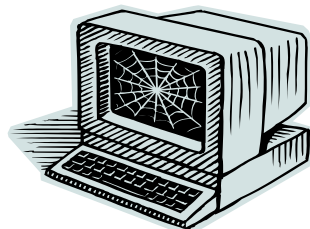
Jim Maloney, the Web Guy.

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OFFUTT’S RUNWAY RENOVATION PROJECT

The *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* will relocate all flight operations temporarily to Lincoln Airport (LNK). Starting in early February 2021, aircraft stationed at Offutt AFB will depart and not to return until fall 2022. Once all aircraft depart, the second work phase will start on Offutt’s runway, northwest hammerhead and Mass Parking Apron (MPA).

Offutt’s runway (circa 1944-1959), has over 40% of the original runway currently in place. Over decades, there have been significant runway closures for repair (1983, 1995, 2006) with each closure getting selective repairs.



In early 2014, the **Wing** received approval to plan another round of selective slab repair. In December 2018, after 4+ years of design/analysis, SAF/IE approved a full-depth replacement of the runway, northwest hammerhead, and later, the selective slab repair of the MPA.

Offutt’s current runway 12/30 is: 100% Portland Concrete (PCC); 11,703’ long; 150’ wide with 75’ shoulders. The completed new runway 13/31 (a ten degree shift) will be: a combination of PCC/hot mix asphalt; still 11,703’ length and 150’ width; but with, flush mounted runway edge lighting and 25’ shoulders; removal of taxiway N, extended edge of taxiway P, and turnaround for runway 31.

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To use Lincoln for flight operations during the Offutt closure, significant effort was required to revive the parking ramp/facilities. This included: north hangar (#956) renovation, adjacent loading dock (office space, large break room), parking apron, and temporary hangar (#957) for fuel cell, aircraft wash and normal maintenance.

Hangar 956 will be the staging area for parts, tools, vehicle and ground equipment maintenance; as well, plus RC-fleet inspections. (*Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth shield in place.*)



In addition to completed renovations, several temporary structures/leased facilities were required to meet **Wing** and mission partner’s operational needs.

During Offutt’s runway closure, the **Wing** will have 700+ personnel commuting to Lincoln daily. Flight ops will mirror a normal OAFB workday and 60+ will be TDY to LNK rotating with counterparts every 4-5 days. The cooperation of mission partners, the 155th ARW and Lincoln Airport Authority, was invaluable in making this effort possible.

The Lincoln relocation could not be better timed. The latest inspections of Offutt’s runway indicate that the pavement continues to deteriorate, and the 75+ year old runway is at the end of its service life.

To end on a high note (if all goes as planned), *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* aircraft will return to a brand new OAFB runway in October 2022.

(Article and photo contributed by Mark Schenck, 55th Wing Runway Program Management Office, and Association member, 10 November 2020. Edited by Moore.)



RETIREMENT OF AIRCRAFT WC- 135, #582

WC-135 aircraft 62-3582 arrived at Offutt AFB for the last time on 2 November 2020. The aircraft assigned to the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth's* 45th Recon Sqd in 1998 as part of the CONSTANT PHOENIX (nuclear air sniffer) program after its previous life as a 55th SRW/Wing, 2nd ACCS, EC-135 "Looking Glass" asset. An historic airframe to be sure.

A low approach was flown past ceremony attendees prior to final landing.



(Photo by 55th Wing Public Affairs)

In an amusing statement, the OAFB fire department agreed to wash any last remaining bits of radiated particles from her skin as she pulled into her parking spot on Fox 2

Her retirement ceremony/farewell roast was on 13 November at the Bennie Davis Maintenance Facility, Dock 1, and from there, the bird will fly to AMARG (309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group, previously AMARC, the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center, AKA: "The Boneyard."), a joint service facility managed by the US Air Force Material Command located near Tucson, and Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ.

(Basic article contributed by Major Glenn Roberts, 45 RS, 4 November 2020.)



OPEN SKIES MISSION IS CLOSED

President Trump's withdrawal from the Open Skies treaty took effect 22 November leaving the 55th Wing's two OC-135B aircraft without a mission. The photo recon equipped planes periodically overflew Russian areas to check on treaty compliance. Nineteen missions were flown in 2019, but none of the slated 11 sorties this year happened due to the COVID pandemic and Trump's pull out announcement six months ago, noted LtCol Andrew Maus, commander of the 45th RS. Some 34 nations had participated in the program since 2002 with more than 1500 missions flown.

When aircraft malfunctions required landing at any remote base in Russia, the crews were treated more like prisoners than guests, with ensuing communications, logistics and diplomatic channels being complicated.

The aircraft likely will not sit idle, but may be used for training/pilot pros, etc. The official Air Force statement: "The Air Force continues to access options for realigning, repurposing, or retiring the two OC-135B aircraft as well as other associated equipment in accordance with DoD guidance."



MEMORABILIA IS MOVED TO WING HQ IN BLDG 500



On 18 November, Association members Mo Krishna and Mark Schenck joined 55th Wing alums Carlton Knight and Dan Jensen (at left) and *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* OPR Major Desiree (Dizzy) Bricks (with the carton). Packing up and moving Association/alumni memorabilia from the Dougherty Conference Center trophy-cases.

The items which officially belong to the USAF Historian's Office, are managed locally by the 55th Wing Historian John McQueney, were safely

moved and secured in the now **55th Wing HQ** (Building 500). From this storage site, items will be rearranged for public display in Bldg 500's theater foyer/entrance.

(Article and photo contributed by Mo Krishna, 20 November)

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MAIL 'N STUFF

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Hi Max,

Another informative newsletter. (July 2020).

I am not around your area very much, but I appreciate your work in the development and distribution of the newsletter.

During my tenure with the **55th SRW** at Forbes AFB, KS, I was an RB-47 head crew (R-1) on a flight over the Mediterranean Sea and captured data from *Sputnik* when it was launched in

October 1957. I was probably at Incirlik AB, Turkey, for about 1.5 years total, one TDY at a time into the 1960s.

Crewed on Wanda Bell for a year at Shemya AFB, AK, flying formation with MiGs and recording data on Russian re-entry vehicles.

The 1962 Cuban blockade found me TDY with about five crews in Bermuda looking for the missile-bearing Russian freighter. We found her and with my limited Russian we identified the GROZNE with missiles on board, as the ship was trying to run the blockade. (I had just flunked a night course in Russian but knew its name would not be in English).

Had lots of following adventures crewing a B-58 and running a computer system in Viet Nam in later years.

Jay Roland, Del Rey Oaks, CA *(From e-mails, 25 August and 15 September 2020.)*

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I WAS THE COPILOT AND HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE LANDINGS!!

Contributed by the late Jack Kovacs, Fairborn, OH, 3 November 2020.

It is the summer of 1963, Forbes AFB, Topeka, Kansas.

I'm a first lieutenant. It's late on rainy afternoon, we are deploying to Turkey in an RB-47E Tell-Two. Take off time in the late afternoon allows us to cross the Atlantic Ocean at night for use of celestial navigation, and coast-in to Spain at dawn, landing at Incirlik AB, Turkey, about noon local time.

All goes fine on take off from Forbes, until "gear-up" and climb power set. Losing oil pressure on one of the outboards!! Abort mission and return to Forbes, but too heavy to land right away.

Since we can't dump fuel, we have to fly around 'dirty' (gear and flaps down, approach chute out) at mid-altitude for about three hours to get down to allowable landing weight.



By the time we are on final it's now dark and still raining. As usual, the AC lands a little "hot", calls for brake chute, but for some reason, it delays a few seconds, then pops out (brake chute door may have been frozen due to flying in freezing rain for hours). We come to a stop about 10-15 feet on the macadam overrun, which was **not** weight bearing, especially with an all day rain. All switches off, abandon aircraft and crew assembles off to the side of the aircraft in the rain.

Whoops! As we climb down the ladder we notice that the front main gear had sunk into the macadam so much that the bottom of the entrance ladder, normally well above the ground, is now touching the ground, and the front main gear is buried into the mud up to the hub. No need for the fire trucks and ambulances, and their crews, which were standing nearby.

Then we see three or four people running across the infield toward us, with one hollering "Where's the aircraft commander"?? In unison, the nav, two ravens and I all swing our arms to point at our AC. The person who was hollering was a one-star, commander of the 21st Air Division!!

Despite the rest of us thinking our deployment would be cancelled for sure, we left for Turkey, in

another aircraft, the following day, and spent the next 90 days flying alert missions out of Incirlik.

Which brings us to the "Rest of the Story".

A few days before our scheduled departure to the States, our AC had been bragging about how he was going to buzz the airfield as we departed. Every chance we got, up to the night before, the rest of us tried to talk him out of it. Our AC thought he was a better pilot than he actually was!

On departure morning everything went fine through takeoff and climb-out, which was to the east. At 5000', doing 180° turn to head west, the rest of the crew is thinking the AC had changed his mind about the low pass. All of a sudden, during the turn the AC calls the tower and requests permission to make a low pass. It's just after 0600.

The tower approves, and we start a slight descent, building up airspeed. The next thing we know we have passed almost at rooftop level **OVER THE BARRACKS, not over** the runway, then pulled up to climb, while the AC shoves the throttles to 100% as the engines are pointed back toward the ground! (Roof-top level was confirmed by those on the ground who later stated that the engine exhaust fumes had settled around the barracks buildings.) A few seconds later the tower calls and says, "That ought to wake them up."

We climbed to cruise altitude and headed for Spain where we hoped to get a tanker so we could fly home non-stop. But that was not to be. When we contacted the SAC command post at Torrejon AB, we were told there were no tankers available and we would have to land at there, spend the night, and try for a tanker from England the next day.

So, on that beautiful, clear, sunny day, the AC opted for a visual descent to the base. As we completed our Before Landing Checklists, I heard the AC call Torrejon tower saying we were on "straight-in final". I brought to his attention that Torrejon was off our right wing **not in front** of us, and we were on final to Barajas!

With a sharp, steep turn, and much jockeying of the throttles and aircraft, we landed hot as usual. Blew two tires (one front, one rear) and somewhere along the way, threw a turbine blade through the engine cowling of the number 3 engine, which fortunately did not hit the fuselage.

Tires changed, engine changed, cowling fixed, we left the next morning for the UK in hope of connecting with a tanker. But it didn't happen, and again we had to land and spend the night. With a shortened final, high airspeed, and much throttle jockeying, we landed hot, and again blew two tires!

We left the next morning, got a tanker and made it back to Forbes. As usual, the **Wing** had our families on the flight line to welcome us home.

So the AC was going to make a nice landing to show off. He hit hard and we bounced and had to recover by going around. The next time we landed without incident. But that's not the end of it.

The low pass over Incirlik at 0600 local time woke the Turkish base commander and his complaint made it back to SAC HQ. It turned into a minor international incident. That, coupled with what happened on the way home caused the AC to lose his crew.

No loss for me, because I had already received notification for a PCS to Incirlik that I had arranged for four months later. So I went on spare-status for the rest of my time in the **55th** at Forbes.

The AC's fair-haired boy status with the wing ops officer couldn't save him this time, and he was transferred from Forbes to a T-37 training unit. The rest of the crew was assigned to other crews in the **55th**.

"NOW YOU KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY."

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YET ANOTHER ELDRIDGE MILESTONE

The trio became pilots 24 years apart, were assigned to **55th** about 21 years apart, deployed in COMBAT SENT AC 849 21 years apart, and now, with Joshua joining the **Association**, there are now three generations of the same family in the organization, a historic first. Hoo-rah!!



Photo taken by 55th Wing Public Affairs in July 2014: Golda, Sr., at left, Golda, Jr. (Tom), center, Joshua, now a major at Columbus AFB, MS. Golda lives in Waco, TX; Tom, in Bennett, NE.

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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 2. We encourage and welcome any input.

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When events featuring 55th members 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.

Thanks, and Videmus Omnia, Max.



(Graphic by Patricia Gros, friend of the Association.) (Note: The graphic is dated, but then, so am I.)

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EAST COAST "CHAPTER"

East coast area alumni, including active duty, retirees, Pentagon habitués, and 'beltway bandits', have occasional social gatherings COVID restrictions allowing. Events are organized periodically for reconnecting and camaraderie in the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* spirit.

For information on 55th Wing Association East events, or to get on the e-mail listing, e-mail Ricky McMahan at potomacpistol@gmail.com. His cohort is Trish Seinwill, pseinwill@yahoo.com

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 in that area.

Ricky and Trish are considering a wine tasting in the Piedmont area of Virginia in the future.

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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, Colorado Springs, and Dayton, OH, what say you?!?)

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EC-135C RESTORATION NOVEMBER 2020

Since the restoration of the interior of the EC-135C Aircraft 38049 is basically complete and the

exterior of the aircraft is prepared for priming and painting, the SAC Museum is concentrating on finishing the exterior of the aircraft.

The Museum has posted a video to its website which provides a virtual tour of the restoration inside the aircraft.

Go to <https://sacmuseum.org/what-to-see/restoration/>, then click the **big red arrow** for a two minute tour of the unpainted exterior and completed interior of 049.

The COVID-19 restrictions delayed the Museum's progress in priming and painting the outside of the aircraft. That causes lots of fumes and the Museum must schedule the painting and priming during periods when the Museum is not occupied by persons not protected from the fumes. The paint, provided by PPG, is on hand and painting has started. However, it is a slow process.

The Museum has posted some pictures on its Facebook page of the painting in progress and the Museum's Facebook site is probably the best site to monitor the process.

Pictures of the project's progress from day-one are also 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.

The Museum voluntarily closed in March due to the pandemic. After careful planning by the staff to safely re-open, the Museum opened its doors to the public in May.

As a result the Museum's operations and income were severely disrupted during the shutdown. It needs more members interested in preserving the history of SAC, and more funds are needed to get 049 ready for display. You can join, or renew memberships, at <https://sacmuseum.org/join-give/membership/>.

Donations may be sent to: Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum, Attn: Development, c/o EC-135C, 2821 West Park Hwy, Ashland, NE, 68003; or on line at: SACMuseum.org/donate. **Please specify that the donation is for the EC-135C restoration.** Or donate to the general operating fund. The Museum still needs all the assistance it can get.

The **Association** BoD authorized the donation of \$500 to the Museum's general fund this month.

If you like what you see of the restoration, please express your appreciation in your comments.

*(Article provided by **Hank Carriger**, Volunteer Coordinator, Boerne, TX, after review and coordination with **John M. Lefler, Jr.**, Marketing Manager, Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum by e-mail, 19 November 2020.)*

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TAPS



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CLARK, Thelma M., 84, 13 October 2020, Papillion, NE; wife of **Richard**. He was a **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW)** pilot for many years in RB-47s at Forbes AFB, KS, and RC-135s at Offutt AFB, NE, from the 1960s into the late 1970s.

COEFIELD, Ralph, 91, 9 November 2020, Fair Oaks Ranch, TX; wife, **Linda**. Ralph (Twiggy) served many years in the **55th SRW** as an RB-47 EWO at Forbes and RCs and staff officer at Offutt, 1960s-1970s. A notable and affable character, he never met a stranger.

CONCANNON, Charles, 73, 17 October 2020; wife **Elizabeth (Beth)**. An RC-135 navigator in the **55th** at Offutt circa 1970s. After Air Force retirement, he and Beth had successful real estate careers.

GALLAGHER, June "Irish", 86, 31 July, 2020, Bellevue, NE. Irish was the widow of **Lee**, they were married nearly 60 years. He was an EC-135 navigator in the 2ACCS in the 1970s. Lee passed several years ago. Irish was an avid golfer and loved to travel.

KEMPF, Paul Robert, 80, 2 October 2020, Houghton, LA. Paul, AKA: PK, Bob, 'Crowbar', was another **55th SRW** character in an era when they abounded. He was an EWO in RBs at Forbes in the 1960s and RCs at Offutt in the 1970s.

Retiring after a tour at Barksdale, he had his own business of carpentry and building projects.

KNIGHTLY, Robert M., 89, 2 October 2020. Omaha, NE; **Reva**, wife of 67 years. A Kansas native and KU Jayhawk, Bob was a SAC-era dual rated pilot/nav in RB-47s in the **55th** at Forbes in the 1960s. He went to Kadena AB, Okinawa, in RC-135s and became the ops officer of the 82nd SRS. Returning to the **55th** at Offutt after a tour in SKorea, he was chief of Recon Ops before retiring in 1975. He then had a long career in real estate.

KOVACS, John (Jack) A., 85, 2 December 2020, Fairborn, OH; married to **Judy** for 62 years. Jack was an RB-47 pilot in the **55th SRW** from 1958-64; an ops officer in SAC Det 4, Incirlik AB, Turkey 1964-66. (*See tribute article following.*)

KUMOR, Frank, J., 71, 4 December 2020, Bellevue, NE; wife, **Patricia**. An Air Force veteran and long time member and supporter of the **55th Association**, he was an institution in the local business community. (*See tribute article to follow.*)

LAMPMAN, Richard, 80, 17 October 2020, Schertz, TX; wife, **Diane**. Dick served in the **55th SRW** as an EWO in RBs at Forbes in the 1960s, then in RCs at Offutt early 1970s. He later was assigned to the 1st CEVG at Barksdale AFB. LA.

MINER Jeffrey K., 58, 30 September 2020, Bellevue, NE; wife, **Deb**. Jeff was a 24th/45th RS COBRA BALL raven who later commanded the **55th Operations Support Squadron**, then the 318th Information Operations Group at Lackland AFB, TX. He also served with the Joint Functional Component Command-ISR, and as NSA's US CYBER Command liaison to Africa Command. Jeff later worked for Spiral Solutions and Technologies in Bellevue for several years.

PERCIVAL, Gary L., 81, 14 March 2020, Biloxi, MS; wife of 59 years, **Janet**. Another long time **55th SRW** veteran, he was an EWO in RBs at Forbes and RCs at Offutt, 1960s-1970s, before becoming an SR-71 planner at SAC HQ. Moving to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Gary had a second career at Ingalls Shipbuilding as a marine electrical designer.

PREDOVICH, Larry A., 76, 1 August 2020, Salida, CO; married to **Karen** for 51 years. A KC-135 tanker nav with several Young Tiger deployments before coming to the **55th** at Offutt in

RCs circa 1980s. He later had commands at Johnson Island, HI, and Wurtsmith AFB, MI, retiring in 1991. He then became rancher in his home town.

SMITH, HILDE, 98, 1 August 2020, Adamstown, MD. She was the widow of legendary **Robert L. (RL)**, a WWII veteran pilot who served in the **55th SRW** for many years at Forbes and Offutt, 1960s, 1970s. They were married 67 years; he passed in 2012. Hilde was the consummate Air Force wife, supportive of RL's many career moves. She gladly mentored the younger wives of the men in his units.

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Note that the cause of death is rarely stated even if known, except in unusual circumstances, such as accidents of various kinds. With the above group, just one is attributed to COVID-19.

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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 (i.e.: 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 beginning in 1996.

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.



John (Jack) A. Kovacs, LtCol, USAF-Retired, was a Connecticut Yankee who, after commissioning and pilot training, began his 26 year Air Force career as a pilot in RB-47s with the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing**, Forbes AFB, KS, 1958-1964. He then served as an ops officer in SAC Det 4, in Incirlik AB, Turkey, 1964-66, supporting **55th SRW** missions there.



Jack moved to more responsible positions at SAC HQ, Reconnaissance Center at Offutt AFB, NE, 1968-70, 1972-75, and at the United Nations Command HQ at Yongsan Army Garrison, in Seoul, Korea

After tours as Director of Reconnaissance (DOR), 98thSW, Torrejon AB, Spain, 1975-76, and DOR, 306th SW, Ramstein AB, Germany, 1976-78, his last assignment was as the Operations Officer, Det-2, 1401st MAS Wright Patterson (W-P) AFB, OH, where he retired in 1983, a die-hard Nebraska Husker fan in Buckeye country.

Jack was a member of the **55th Wing Association** from its inception, and that is where his legacy lies as he made major contributions to the heritage of the organization and the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*.

RB-47 RESTORATION

When RB-47H, tail number 4299, a former **55th SRW** asset, rolled into the National Museum of the Air Force near W-P AFB, OH, disassembled on flat bed trucks after decades of deterioration on static display in the elements at Salina, KS, he was literally Johnny (Jack) on the Spot.

From day one in the summer of 1999, Jack monitored the restoration process and was a hands-on volunteer doing grunt work. The restoration crew was delighted to have someone there who had actually flown that specific plane.

That was a dedicated effort he documented every step of the way until it rolled out four years later in pristine condition. The aircraft then became the center piece of the Museum's Cold War Annex in 2003.

COLD WAR MONUMENT

Beginning in early 2001 the **Association** decided to commission a Cold War Monument for placement at the Museum's Memorial Gardens. Although the planning/design committee was in the Offutt area, Jack was once more the on-site man involved in every aspect of the project, conscientiously coordinating with then-**Association** President Bill Ernst, and especially with Dodds Monuments in Dayton, the memorial builder.

Here are Bill's words: "I knew him long before we worked closely on the 2003 reunion and dedication of the **55th** Cold War Memorial. He did all the coordination with the Museum to secure the monument location as well as the design approval. He also monitored the monument design to ensure it was exactly followed. Every inscription was carefully cross checked. Every brick in the patio surrounding the monument was carefully checked for accuracy. Every weed that grew in the cracks between the pavers or moss that gathered was hand cleaned by Jack on his hands and knees if need be. It was Jack who noted a crack in the granite base and closely monitored its replacement. I have never known anyone so dedicated, and took so much pride in his work."

As that original project expanded to adding a brick patio and four marble benches, Jack was still the guy coordinating and overseeing it all. No detail overlooked as Bill noted.

His tireless dedication (that word again) never let up until the monument was in place and dedicated in September 2003 at a grand reunion. It did not stop there, as with his side kick **Larry LaFlair**, they routinely did custodial work on the patio area season in and season out until another larger crew took over the responsibility last year, 16 years!!



Perry Peloquin, who now coordinates the Monument maintenance team said, “Jack was pure gold. A gentleman and an absolute good soul.”

2003 REUNION

As an ‘oh by the way’, over the same period of time, in his ‘spare’ time Jack planned and chaired the September 2003 SAC Reconnaissance Reunion, the keystone to dedicating the memorial. It was the largest and arguably best reunion ever planned and executed. Over 735 SAC recon veterans (548 *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth* represented), families and guests attended the festivities, with 690 meals served at the banquet under and around displays at the Museum.

Of course that event took a lot of people involved to plan, coordinate and execute, but Jack’s leadership was essential, and his pre-planning guide and after action report were second to none.

Over the course of four years, Jack simultaneously monitored, coordinated, hands-on worked three major projects, and never let up. For that service Jack was awarded a Life Membership in the **Association** in September 2006.

Jack’s devotion to duty, passion for getting the job done, and dedication (*this is a recording*) should be an inspiration to everyone in the **Association** and the active duty **Wing**.

If ever a person can be said to be irreplaceable, it is Jack Kovacs.



Frank J. Kumor grew up on a farm west of North Platte, NE, served in the Air Force for four

years from 1970 as an aircraft mechanic. After his AF service, he finished his watch repair and jewelry training and was hired by **Erwin Dreibus** to work at Erwin's Jewelry in Bellevue in 1975. Thus, became the start of what became a legendary career and dedicated community

involvement.

In addition to his **Association** support, Frank was a **55th Wing** Commander’s Wingman (awarded the coveted leather flying jacket that he wore often) in 2001 in recognition of his superior and continued community support to the **55th Wing**, and as the 343rd RS co-commander for 15 years.

He was an original member of the Offutt Advisory Council and frequently attended official events at Offutt. He and Pat were regulars at the Birthday Ball and other social events at Offutt.

Frank assumed ownership of Erwin’s in 1989, and if there was a community event or service organization, Frank belonged and participated: Bellevue Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, as well as the Olde Towne Task Force, and served as President of the Olde Towne Merchant's Association. He was elected to the Bellevue Public School Board and served 18 years. He is in the Sarpy County Business Hall of Fame for obvious reasons.

Generous to a fault to customers and community, he donated time and items to most every cause and event in Bellevue and at Offutt, including the *Tales of the 55th*.

It seems everyone in Bellevue who walked into Erwin's Jewelry has a story about Frank and his ability to connect with everyone and put them at ease. He believed in giving back to the community that had given him so much. It is likely that anyone who was ever stationed at Offutt or lived in Bellevue in the past 45 years patronized his shop.

Here are a few words from **55th Wing** Commander, Colonel Marks: “Mr. Kumor was an original **55th Wingman**, a long-time member of the Offutt Advisory Council, and co-commander of the 343d Reconnaissance Squadron. His involvement with the Ravens is legendary. When the squadron’s headquarters was destroyed during the devastating March 2019 flood, he was one of the first to step up and ask how could he help.

Mr. Kumor was a man who truly embodied the Air Force core value ‘service before self.’ He will be deeply missed by everyone who had the opportunity to meet him. His numerous contributions to generations of Airmen and this installation will not be forgotten.”

REUNIONS

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55TH WING REUNION/ROUND-UP STILL WORKING IT

Submitted by Val Dugie, 55th Wing Association Reunion Chair

There have been some interesting/challenging developments and changes since the last newsletter update.

We are still in the planning stages to gather in Tucson, AZ, aka “The Old Pueblo”, for this event. Our window has diverted to fall 2021 due

to not being able to finalize an agreement with our top two hotel locations. **For now, tentatively mark your calendars for 13-17 October 2021!**

The Reunion BRAT continues the negotiations with a hotel property very interested in hosting our event despite complications with recent site/location closures and re-opening requirements caused by pandemic concerns and health regulations. That said though, we are making progress and hope to have a final hotel on contract before the next newsletter. The focus will then shift to putting together the reunion events and activities schedule.

We have narrowed the field to a single hotel location with dates noted above, but please be aware this is all **very tentative** and could change depending on several items we are still working through.

Our final goal is a safe and relaxing venue for the **Wing** and **Association** members to gather once again.

Look for reservation information and links to the hotel site in the next newsletter!!! More details and information to follow as soon as hotel location details are finalized.

If the basic info (hotel and dates) becomes known or changes before that, the announcement will be posted on the Association web sites, social media pages and sent via ‘flash’ messages far and wide.

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, plus friends, associates, supporters, and family members thereof.

Stay tuned as we are all looking forward to seeing one another at another grand reunion.

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82nd RS REUNION RE-SCHEDULED

Due to the pandemic, the reunion previously planned for July 2020 has been postponed to (*tentative*) 1-4 July 2021. So put it on your calendar and I’ll send a formal announcement as we get closer. Next year will be the 30th anniversary of the reactivation of the squadron under the **55th Wing**, just to make you feel a little older!!

Stay safe and healthy,

*Mace MacElhaney, Colorado Springs, CO
Macelhaney@comcast.net*

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DFC SOCIETY 2021 REUNION

The Distinguished Flying Cross Society (DFCS) will host the 2021 Reunion in Washington, DC, in mid- to late September 2021. The 2019 Dayton Reunion was the best yet, and we plan to be even better in 2021.

The DFCS is in the process of will negotiate the host hotel.

A list of fantastic tours will be finalized in collaboration with the selected contractor. There will be options for tour packages.

The Welcome Night Dinner will be “under the wings” in a museum yet to be chosen.

Updated information on the details can be found at dfcsociety.org.

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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.

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.



(Photo by Sargent.)

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.

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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.

Anyone desiring to purchase any of the advertised items should contact the haberdasher, **William (Bill) Sargent** at 1122 Summit Ridge Drive, Papillion, NE, 68046 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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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. Classy but not expensive.

(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, 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.**

The owner the late Frank Kumor was a member and ardent supporter of the **Association.**

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WHO SHOT WHAT

Graphics from Clip Art, and organization and public web sites. Photos not previously attributed: General Siniscalchi, official Air Force; Fortin by family. **55th** pin by Moore.

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*Both these items were published in the July 2001 **Videmus Omnia** newsletter, yet they are almost timeless.*

*The following article was written by **Eugene Curtin**, Senior Writer for the Bellevue Leader at the time in its March 7, 2001 issue.*

*He was moved to write the piece after attending the **Tales of the 55th** gathering at the Offutt Officers Club on a Friday evening in February, and the Birthday Ball the next evening.*

*It is an emotional tribute to the men and women of the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth.***

(It is reprinted here with his gracious permission and a few minor edits. Max)

OLD CROWS NEVER DIE

I never considered a military career.

I simply never thought about it, any more than I thought about becoming an oil rigger or a traffic engineer.

Perhaps I would have if someone had suggested it. But no one ever did, and so the idea never occurred to me.

I felt a twinge of regret about that last month when I attended the tribute to the **55th Wing** sponsored by the Association of Old Crows and the **55th SRW Association**. For 23 years it has been my job to take a seat in the back of the room, shut up and watch. That's basically what we reporters do, or are supposed to do: Observe, and then report on

what we see, preferably with some fairness and accuracy. So I took my seat and shut up.

What I saw was a series of retired warriors recount some hair-raising experiences. They were war stories of a familiar kind, seen in countless movies: Airplanes being shot at, adventures in foreign lands, long hours under appalling conditions, lengthy separations from family.

But there was a subtext, a subtext that made me suspect these guys possess something that can't be measured in money or medals, something I'll never own.

Like most subtexts, it's easy to miss. This particular one is probably best described as camaraderie, but a mellow form, far more mellow than its close relative that was much on display the following day during the Wing's 60th Birthday Ball over at Harvey's Hotel.

I noticed it in their greetings and manner of relating to one another. Handshakes were close up, not at arm's length. They patted each other on the back, gently massaging shoulders in a manner that might almost be described as – forgive me, guys – affectionate.

They looked each other in the eye with the ease and comfort of brothers; they refilled each other's glasses, seemed to have little sense of "personal space" when chatting face to face, often whispering jokes and asides into each other's ears.

There was an intimacy there. It was an easy intimacy, too. Generals, colonels, captains and everything in between seemed to mingle freely. I did not sense, among these retired military, any continuing sense of rank. Perhaps my familiarity with their world is too slight to observe such subtleties, but it seemed to my untrained eye a pretty egalitarian gathering, devoid of awkwardness related to higher or lower, exalted or lowly.

To the rest of us, who pursue our careers in the relative stability of a rooted home, an ever-present family, and familiar streets and shopping malls, this intimacy is hard to come by. We have not seen co-workers get their heads blown off by some Vietcong killer. We have not spent months and years away from our kids in a remote desert or jungle, shared a sleeping bag with two other guys splitting 24-hour duty, or had to wear suits protecting us from chemical attack in the sweltering heat of deserts.

Certainly, the airplanes in which we travel have never been fired upon.

It's an odd life. You haul your family all over the world, enroll your kids in 10 different schools, live always in a house, never a home. Your natural friends – those with whom you grew up and went through high school – fall by the wayside as you make a series of fleeting friendships in whatever civilian neighborhood you land. The lasting friendships, I imagine, are found in the service.

* * * * *

The gentle spirit of the retired crewdogs was nowhere present the following night when active-duty members of the **55th Wing** gathered at the grand ballroom of Harvey's Casino for their annual Birthday Ball.

These troops are in the game still. The sense of rank was strong, with adulatory applause directed to the wing commander whose speech was packed with ringing declarations of the **Wing's** worth and superiority. The wives were all stunning, dressed in strapless gowns that gave testimony to the virility of their warrior husbands.

The stories of these men and women, of course, are still being written, and one could sense they were competing to make them as brilliant as possible. Ladders are still being climbed, favor still being courted, promotions still being sought. Stars or stripes dangle elusively on their horizons.

This I did not envy. It was a world I know too well.

But I know that something more attractive awaits them in retirement.

There they will join organizations and mingle with men and women who know their souls, who know the hells they have endured, who can welcome them with a rub of a shoulder into a fraternity forged by fire.

And people like me will hover around the edges, noticing all this, forever aware that we cannot be where they are, because we have not been where they have been.

* * * * *

(This is a letter I wrote in response to Mr. Curtin's article. It was published March 14th 2001 in the Bellevue Leader. Max.)

Eugene Curtin's piece, "Old Crows Never Die" (March 7), was indeed a stirring and respectful tribute to the personnel who have served, and are serving in, the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth**. Any reader could tell it was personal, sincere, and heartfelt. Mr. Curtin is to be commended for sharing his feelings with readers of the Leader.

He mentioned the easy camaraderie, the intimacy of fellowship, and, yes - affection among the retired warriors. But that merely scratches the surface of how true and solid the bond is for those kindred troops.

There has been, is, and always will be, the deep feeling of pride of wearing the uniform and serving one's country. Plus the job satisfaction and sense of duty in spite of sacrifices made.

The **55th** has a storied heritage with roots in WWII as the **55th Pursuit Group** (1940-41), then as the **55th Reconnaissance Group** (1947) in Strategic Air Command. It evolved into the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing**, its designation for 42 years, succeeded by the current **55th Wing** in 1992.

The unit has always held a singular place in SAC and the US Air Force due to its varied operational missions of national and global significance, through the Cold War and into some hot ones. Even today, it is the largest and busiest wing in Air Combat Command.

It was my distinct privilege to have served in the **55th SRW** for 23 years, the last 16 here at Offutt. I know its history and lived much of it with legions of dedicated men and women, many of whom, both locally and across this country, have known each other and stayed connected for 30, 40, 50 years. They may move away, return, retire here or elsewhere, but it is a unique bonding of memorable experiences in a truly great organization that is the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** which unites us as a proud fraternity.

Max R. Moore, LtCol, USAF-Retired

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**I AM A UNITED STATES
MILITARY VETERAN**



**BE
ADVISED**

**I once took a
SOLEMN OATH to defend
the CONSTITUTION
against ALL enemies,
foreign and DOMESTIC.
No one has ever relieved
me of my duties under this
Oath!**

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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
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to:
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P.O. BOX 13165
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* 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 Mohan Krishna, Membership Chairman, at volvomo@gmail.com, or at the above mailing address,.**

