

Tom [Dawes], the tankers and we had radar beacons codes (1-2-1 etc.) which were determined at pre-takeoff briefing then displayed on each other's nav radar scope receiver on which the tanker/s (range) departed their A/R holding pattern and turned towards us (head-on, we still at altitude) and on which we computed our decent point (range) to arrive (ideally) at four miles behind the lead tanker and 500' below lead tanker's altitude who by then had turned down "our" track ... (again based on beacon separation) with three more KC -97's in 60 degree right echelon, 1/2 mile, 500' separation, stacked up.

I recall our indicated descent speed was 310 KIAS ..we then closed and climbed from the four mile point to the "pre-contact-position"... slowly reducing closure speed to pre-computed formation speed depending on our "start" A/R gross weight (185-195 KIAS)...then accelerating after hook-up as we on-loaded fuel ... hopefully ending A/R at 225 KIAS ... and very heavy ... the tanker's R-4360's really straining at the end of A/R. Remember, we had set our flaps at 50 percent down ... or half flaps as we only had two settings ... 50 percent (1/2 flaps ) and 100 percent (full flaps).

Beacon ... I seem to recall it was the APN-69 beacon. Too long ago to be certain.

It was a crew effort and more so in reduced visability conditions, the navigator's final azimuth corrections critical in the last 1/2 mile as we climbed and closed to A/R altitude .... radio silent, pitch black and under the dancing Aurora Borealis. That's "when the fun began."

Ray Britton was a true "Gentleman's Gentleman" and his wife Mary the perfect lady.  
V.O.,  
Reg

Reg [Urschler], your account of the navigational challenges flying out of Thule give me further insight into my dad's job as the Nav on the RB-47. He said it was some of the most demanding yet rewarding flying he did in his 16 years as a navigator.

He mentioned one incident where they were in a must-get-the-gas-or-bail-out situation and they could not locate the tanker.

I believe those missions were flown in almost complete radio silence with probably minimal use of the airborne radar which must have made locating the tankers even more of a challenge. I'm not sure if the Tankers even had radar beacons but Dad said he used the altitude ring on the Radar to get a primary target which in my limited experience with the older APN 59 radar I vaguely understand. I may not have described the situation correctly but I know it gave him immense satisfaction. The RB47 was a crew effort. Dad flew with Ray Britton for at least 12 years- they were like brothers.

Thanks again!  
Tom