

Prep for Birthday Ball begins

By retired Lt. Col. Max Moore
55th Strategic Reconnaissance
Wing Association

The 55th Wing will hold its 30th annual Birthday Ball April 5 at the Qwest Center in Omaha.

The theme of this year's ball, "Honoring the Heritage, Dominating the Day, Forging the Future" recognizes the 55th Wing's varied missions - past, present and future.

This year, the wing is celebrating its 67th anniversary since its founding in January 1941 as the 55th Pursuit Group flying P-38 and P-51 fighters based at Hamilton Field, Calif.

Following World War II, the unit became Strategic Air Command's 55th Reconnaissance Group at MacDill Field, Fla., in February 1947. It was during this time that the group switched from fighters to the reconnaissance aircraft that the wing is now known for.

The group later became the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing based at Barksdale AFB, La.; Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico; Forbes AFB, Kan.; and Offutt AFB from 1950 to 1993. Following the Cold War, the 55th SRW evolved into the 55th Wing. Today, the 55th Wing continues the proud heritage of all Airman who ever were members of the 55th.

The 55th Wing's Birthday Ball had its origins in January 1979. The 55th SRW Commander, Brig. Gen. (then colonel) Regis F. A.

Urschler, envisioned the event as a way to connect the wing's foundation, history and heritage to the present active duty personnel and missions. That tradition continues today.

The ball is the wing's largest formal social function of the year and is open to all active duty ranks, retirees and invited community leaders.

The guest speaker is still to be determined but Dave Weber, sports director at WOWT in Omaha, will once again be the master of ceremonies for the event. The program will include Wing Hall of Fame inductions and presentation of this year's winner of the 55th SRW Association's Award for Excellence.

On April 4, the afternoon before the ball, the 55th Wing will host the eighth annual edition of the "Tales of the 55th" at the James M. McCoy Airman Leadership School.

The Tales, an informal gathering sponsored by the 55th SRW Association, will feature speakers with personal stories from throughout the wing's history. Retired Col. Jim Thomas, 55th SRWA president, will be the event emcee. All members of the 55th Wing are invited. Tickets will be available at the door. Cost is still to be determined.

Mark your calendars now so you won't miss any of these events, steeped in history and tradition, and rooted in our identity and achievements for national defense.