

# **55th Wing 1998 Birthday Ball**

## ***A Report From Max Moore***

The 55th Wing held its 20th annual Birthday Ball on 31 January 1998 at Harvey's Casino-Hotel in Council Bluffs, IA. The event celebrated the 57th year of the wing's heritage which had its origin as the 55th Fighter Pursuit Group of World War II. The tradition was conceived by then-Colonel Regis F.A. Urschler when he was the wing commander in 1977-78.

The Ball was attended by 712 active duty personnel, retired former members of the Wing, local dignitaries and guests. Thus making it the largest Ball ever, and the most attended event at Harvey's since its opening just a few years ago.

Among those attending were nearly 80 55SRW Association members and spouses/guests, including Association Board members: President Bill Ernst, Vice President Robb Hoover, Max Moore, LtCol Bo Marlin, and TSgt Craig Kibbe. Five past wing commanders were there, as well: BGen(Ret) Urschler, BGen (Ret) Larry Mitchell, retired Colonels Steve Stevens, Dan Peterson, and Bill Manire.

The theme of the Ball was "Heritage of Excellence" keynoted by retired Marine Lt. Patrick "Clebe" McClary's, a Vietnam War hero and renown motivational speaker, inspiring and riveting speech. Some individuals were recognized as representatives of the various eras in Wing history: WWII by four 55th Fighter Group veterans; Korea, Harry Tull; Cold War, Dick Hedge and Max Moore; Vietnam, Hank Barrows.

Current 55th Wing Commander, BGen Gary Ambrose in his opening remarks extolled the Wing's many and varied accomplishments in the past year, and twice mentioned the 55SRW Association and its membership, and its attending members were recognized en masse.

General Ambrose also concluded his talk with effusive praise and a glowing appreciation of the Association for past contributions and the continuing involvement of its members with the Wing. He gave an emphatic endorsement for joining the "alumni association", saying he was a member who proudly wears the new Association pin. His comments were sincere and indicative of the excellent rapport currently enjoyed between the Association and the Wing.

The Birthday Ball is a gala event done in the best military traditions and ceremony. The Association Board strongly encourages as many members as possible, especially those in the local area of Offutt, to attend this annual festivity in the future. Late January in Omaha may not have the best weather, but the Ball and its associated activities turn into a mini-reunion and are well worth the trip.