



Videmus Omnia

55th WING ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2023

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(AKA: Prezgram)

Fightin' Fifty-Fifth Faithful, Friends, Family and Followers,

Winter has, once-again, recently blanketed the Nebraskan plains--and Offutt planes—with 8+ inches of snow! For those of you fortunate to live

in warmer climates, you have our deepest admiration, trusting your Offutt winter memories are truly distant.

Despite fabled winter hibernations, *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* active-duty and your

Association remain productively “ON ALERT”.

Again, this “Max Missive” will detail more info on several activities since our last newsletter. So, we’ve been cleared for taxi, crossing the hold line. What do we see in our 2023 takeoff roll?

The most pressing future event is the upcoming *55th Wing Birthday Ball*. This historic event was preempted for years in lieu of a September USAF Birthday Ball until the **Wing** (THANKS, “KT”!) and **Association** successfully “*Reignited the Flame*” (2022’s theme).

The 2023 SAVE THE DATE placeholder is 15 April (Tax Day, so all will remember!). This year’s theme is still “under construction”; but will feature

a “flame” construct to keep our collective legacy fires burning.

Once again, this Ball will be at the LaVista Conference Center jointly shared by Embassy Suites and Marriott hotel.

Rooms are reserved (even more than last year) and details will soon be provided by the Ball Committee, which has been meeting weekly since late January to ensure a fun event topped off by saber-cut birthday cake by the eldest amongst us.

Per tradition, the 2023 Ball will be the wrap-up event for the Wing’s Heritage Week which includes Hall of Fame induction, Tales of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*, Wing Museum Open House, Excellence Trophy presentation, and more. We are looking to continue to make this a fun event worthy of a Birthday party to honor our esteemed unit.

Hope you choose to join us.

2023 Reunion/Rendezvous: Colorado Springs in the fall time frame to coincide with a USAF Academy Falcons football game. More to come on that!

Your Board of Directors continues to work:

- By Laws Review/Rewrite
- Structure/Members/Officer positions
- Website new and improved
- New **VIDEMUS OMNIA** sequel to capture decades from when the original ended.
- Membership database: Retaining members and continuing recruiting.

As always, “The Sun Never Sets on the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*”.

Videmus Omnia, Spy V

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55TH WING BIRTHDAY BALL

15 APRIL 2023

LAVISTA CONFERENCE CENTER

As soon as more detailed information, such as how to sign up for the Ball, cost per person, etc.; and how to register for hotel reservations, special rate, is solidified, FLASH messages will be sent far and wide to get the word out there, as well as posted on the **Association** web site.

This is going to be a fun gala in the tradition of what **55th Wing** Birthday Balls used to be, and you will want to be there.

It could turn out to be a mini-reunion as out of towners roll in.

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BALL COMMITTEE 2023

Last April your **Association** successfully re-established a **Wing** social function after five years without this “meaningful” unit heritage event.

While this year’s **55th Wing** Birthday Ball has the full blessing and cooperation of the **Wing commander** and her staff, the Association “is driving the bus.”

Association President Joe Spivey chairs the Ball committee, which is committed from the start to making the gala a fun, fun, fun and memorable event. It could be a mini-reunion.

He reports and coordinates with Colonel Thompson regularly.

Joe is ably assisted by dedicated committee members: Mark Schenk (Convention Center Coordination/Dinner Planning), Mo Krishna (Program/Event Agenda), **Grace Diaz** (Registration/Seating/Publications/Decorations), **Ryan Hansen** (55th Public Affairs), **Billy Moore** and **TSgt Mackenzie Lang** (55th Protocol), **Major Bryan Stigall** and **TSgt Matthew Gleaton** (55th Commanders Action Group), Denny Haun (BX sales/table décor), and Max Moore (Heritage Advisor).

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Our call for a web master replacement has finally been answered. Hoo-rah!!

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55TH WING ASSOCIATION

WEB SITE 3.0

(Like a phoenix rising from the ashes.)

55WA.org

Nearly three years ago then-webmaster **Jim Maloney** started looking for an assistant webmaster, and after no



response over time, decided it was time to let the web hosting contract expire and ride off into the sunset.

Mo Krishna, **Association** Membership Chairman, was working on a new online membership program which would assume some of the web-site utility and some other items, such as event notifications, that could be handled by a “private group” page on Facebook.

The web site, 55SRWA.ORG (1.0) was begun by the late **Don Griffin** in September 1996, and after an 11 year run, he shook the stick and turned over ‘lead’ to Jim Maloney in 2007. He has managed the site, 55WA.ORG (2.0) for the past 15+ years.

Now, a new webmaster has arrived in the form of **Dave Connaughton**. *(See his comments below.)*

Jim continues assisting Dave in the transition for the foreseeable future, and is thankful for Dave’s experience, knowledge, and most of all, interest in continuing the web site.

We encourage members to check it out. We think you’ll like its content and appearance, ease of navigation, etc.

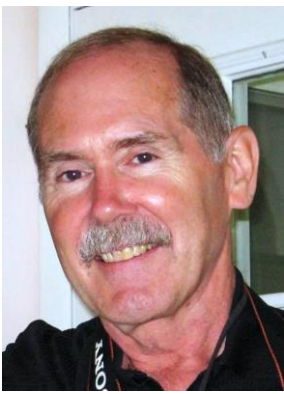
Dave is doing a fabulous job in reviving the old pages and adding many more. The transition and revision will continue progressing, and before long will have membership information available as well as information to keep members current on upcoming events such as Birthday Balls and reunions. Welcome Dave!!!

Jim Maloney

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WEBSITE REDUX

The **Association** plea/request for a web site volunteer found a knucklehead with a passion for history and obviously too much time on his hands.



Jim Maloney has skillfully transitioned the duties to Dave Connaughton, an RC pilot from the 82nd SRS at Kadena (1969), and creator of the Hoggie patch and crew cartoons.

He lives on the Outer Banks of North Carolina (OBX) where he still rides his bicycle 15 miles a day and

volunteers at the Wright Brothers National Memorial.

The OBX is pretty remote, but with the miracle of the Internet, you can send your ideas and edits directly to Dave at support@55wa.org.

He means to keep the site current and relevant for future generations.

It is your site, drop in!

Dave Connaughton

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ASSOCIATION'S VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

On a cold and blustery 10 November 2022 at Offutt AFB, about 55 active duty troops, retirees and friends sheltered in the front alcove of the Riggs Bldg, 55th Wing HQ, attended the annual Veterans Day ceremony sponsored by the Association.

Association President Joe Spivey presided, and after a ring of the 55th Wing Ceremonial Bell, made introductory remarks for the occasion.

55th Wing Chaplain Kevin Humphrey gave the

invocation, followed by the entire assemblage reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Association Board member Mo Krishna read the history of Veterans Day.

President Spivey then recited the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* lineage from its beginning. As he did so, Association member Dan Jensen gave a single solemn ring of the bell for each unit.



Spy V called upon Carlton Knight (seen at center) to pass the red, white and blue wreath to Dennis Haun, a 55th Wing Hall of Fame member. He presented the wreath near the 55th Monument as the audience presented arms.



Colonel Mark Howard, 55th Wing Vice Commander, made his remarks to conclude the ceremony.

The crowd moved into the building foyer to warm up and enjoy light refreshments.

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ASSN HOLIDAY GATHERING 29 DECEMBER 2022

About 55 *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* alumni, family, friends and active duty personnel attended a holiday reception at the Riggs Building 55th Wing Museum to ring out 2022 and greet 2023.

The convivial event provided fellowship and camaraderie in a casual atmosphere. Refreshments were enjoyed, and there was another chance to look around the Museum artifacts put in place by an Association cadre of dedicated volunteers over several months from early 2021 until the present.

The Museum is an ongoing project.



Pictured are some of the attendees: L to R (as best as can be ID'd) Dick Scott, Al Brunner, Denny

Haun, Ham Kennedy, Wes Thibodeaux, Mike Cook (barely visible), Jim Hughes, Spy V, and (in back) Mark Schenck, Carlton Knight. Then in front: Jim Maloney. Tom Miller, 'Tiny' Wolfe behind 55th Wing commander Colonel Kristen Thompson, Max Moore, Kurt Kramer. Steve Stevens on wheels in front. Way back behind Tiny and Kurt: Dan Jensen, Desiree Brooks, Mike Hartman, and 'Stick' Miller. Not pictured: Jim Thomas and several others.

(Many took this shot, but this one was provided by Patrick Moore, Max's son.)

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55th WING MISSION and MODERIZATION STRATEGY

The **Wing** recently released its view of the future. The purpose is “to provide a basic overview of the **55th Wing’s** enduring missions operating the RC-135/WC-135 weapon systems and the EC-130/EC-37B Compass Call (CC) aircraft.

The statement outlines on-going operational missions during competition, crisis and conflict phases, while profiling current modernization programs with continuing mission improvement activities to enable and exceed Future Air Force Design needs.

The goal of all **55th Wing** programs and associated aircraft is to exceed the Chief of Staff of the Air Force’s (CSAF) direction to build the USAF we need; while maintaining critical capabilities in support of foundational Intelligence Community (IC) and on-going Combatant Commanders’ (CCMD) requirements and operations.

The document also provides details on USAF resources and future planning and programming efforts to ensure viability of **55th Wing** specialized R/WC-135/EC-130/37B fleets/capabilities to support evolving National Command Authority (NCA), CCMD, National Intelligence Centers (NIC) and Combat Support Agencies (CSA) needs.”

(Submitted by Association member Jeff Johnson, GS-15, Technical Director, 55th Wing; 9 February 2023.)



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BACON RE-ELECTION

Former **55th Wing** Commander, (BGen USAF-Ret) **Don Bacon** was re-elected to the US House of Representatives for his fourth term last November.

A Republican, he represents Nebraska’s second district which includes much of Omaha and Sarpy County.

He commanded the **Wing** from March 2011 to June 2012. A long time member of the **Association**, BGen Bacon was inducted into the **55th Wing** Hall of Fame last year.



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DON KELLY SARPY COUNTY (NE) COMMISSIONER

Association Board of Directors member, **Don “Husker” Kelly**, completed his seventh consecutive term as president of the Sarpy County Board of Commissioners last January with the election of a new executive.

Sarpy County Administrator **Dan Hoins** read a proclamation honoring Kelly with the Core Values Award.

“The Sarpy County Board of Commissioners wishes to recognize Don Kelly for his leadership, and extend their sincere gratitude for his years of service.”

Kelly was first elected in 2013. He is a retired USAF colonel who served in the **55th** as an RC-135 navigator and later as Deputy Operations Group Commander.

He is married to **Melinda**, the daughter of **Mary** and the late **Arlen Howe**, also a former **55th** navigator and staff officer. Mel followed her mother as a career civil servant, and Mel was executive secretary to **55th Wing** commanders for many years.

*(How’s that for **Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth** lineage?)*





BOARD OF DIRECTORS DIRECTORY

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Awards Chairman Hamilton Kennedy

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Other Members of the Board of Directors:

Bill Ernst, Jim Thomas, Fox Censullo, George Ross, Jim Maloney, Don Kelly, Paul Jeanes, Val Dugie, Bill McKechnie. Active Duty

Representative: Colonel David Priesman.

Appointed Web Master Dave Connaughton

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d@yahoo.comconnaughton65

Appointed Ass't Membership Chair

Jon Adams

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E-mail: jonathan.adams.1979@gmail.com



TREASURER'S REPORT

As of 15 February 2023, the treasury had an account balance (rounded) of \$49,000.



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 2026 (or more) are prorated and allocated through

the ensuing years.

Although the **Association** is solvent, we have expenses, obligations, and bills to pay, such as the Birthday Ball, publishing this newsletter, and projects and donations on the burner.



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 410 members in good standing as of 26 February 2023, compared with 405 on 24 October 2022.

Holding steady here, but more members need



to renew their memberships and the Association needs to add new ones to remain viable.

NOW is the time to send to reup.

152 widows receive the newsletter gratis. As always, they are welcome to any and all **Association** functions. This is one unfortunate growing number, sad to report.

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 19.

Newest among those is the current 55th Wing Commander Colonel Kristen Thompson.

Would be great if other troops followed her example of supporting the Association.

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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 to keep up with your dues.

Dues are due in January of the calendar year after member's expire with a grace period through 31 March before going delinquent.

Now is a good time to renew.

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 to 13704 Tregaron Drive, Bellevue, NE, 68123 to get an update on your membership status.

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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 and widows are dues exempt.

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When using the traditional US Postal Service to send in your due, your contact info, use the following address:

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

When paying on-line use this site:

<https://55th-wingassociation.square.site>

Please remember to e-mail your membership form (also on that site) to volvomo@gmail.com

Sending Mo the PDF membership form is the best technique, but we will take your information however you send it!

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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 our Square site:

<https://55th-wingassociation.square.site>

Please use that form any time you pay dues, and/or to report any address or other changes in your contact information.

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.

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The newsletter editor is not responsible for the membership dues date.

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RECRUITING MEMBERS TO THE ASSOCIATION

(Yes, this is a multiple repeat message.)

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; 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 usually have **no problem filling** officer slots, BoD, or committees. Newbies often think they may be tapped for those sorts of things as often happen 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, flash e-mails, et al.)



COLD WAR MEMORIAL

Your **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing** Cold War Monument remains in the care of **Association** member **Perry Peloquin** and his stalwart crew year round as seasonable weather allows. His report follows:



(From the left front corner, with brick patio and benches.)

The **55th Wing Association** memorial got a late winter touch-up just before President's Day, but it will see a full-on spring cleaning with hot water, soapy sponges, and Preen for the weeds once we hit the end of March as weather permits.



As a bit of a twist, this photo of the reverse side of the memorial is to jog folks' memories of the

historic aircraft inventory aligned with the memorial's commemoration.

Note: 2023 marks the 100th anniversary for the USAF Museum with special events and features each month.

Right now, free guided tours of the Presidential Gallery are offered daily.

Well worth the visit.

(Perry Peloquin, Bellbrook, OH, 20 February 2023.)



55TH INTEL SUPPORT SQD OPENS RENOVATED HQ

The **55th Intelligence Support Squadron (ISS)** officially opened its new headquarters with a ribbon cutting ceremony 6 January 2023 at Offutt AFB.

The ISS headquarters facility was damaged in the March 2019 historic flood that resulted in 720 million gallons of water covering the southeastern portion of the base. The renovation took 2.5 years to accomplish at a cost of \$2.5 million.



Conducting the ceremonial ribbon cutting are: L-R: CMSgt Annika L'Ecuyer, Operations Group Command Chief, Colonel Derek (Bull) Rachel, 55th Operations Group commander, US Senator Deb Fischer (R-NE), AIC Josie Duhon, Ben (Felix) Ungerman, Nebraska Congress Don Bacon's deputy chief of staff; LtCol Brian Sturdevant, ISS commander, and CMSgt Laura Garcia, ISS Senior Enlisted Leader.

(Photo by Kendra Williams, 55th Wing Public Affairs.)

The new headquarters is 28,000 square feet with room for roughly 330 workstations, including around 19,000 square feet of classified space. It has three watch floors, 11 offices, three conference rooms, an auditorium, a classroom and a recreational room.

Established in 2010, the **55th** ISS serves as the **55th Wing's** focal point for intelligence management, oversight, analysis and production. The unit has more than 250 military, civilian and contract personnel spanning 13 Air Force specialties.

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WING'S A-STAFF MILESTONE

The **55th Wing** commemorated its A-Staff achieving initial operating capability with a celebration at the *Warhawk* Community Center on 17 January 2023.

The A-Staff is a structure used instead of the more traditional Air Force staff designations, such as groups and squadrons, to more readily identify the Air Force component staff equivalents of the corresponding J-staff functions. (Air Staff level)



55th Wing Command Chief Melissa Royster (center) and **LtCol Andy Glass**, **55th Wing Director of Staff** sign a commemorative poster.

The A-Staff is currently working towards achieving full operational capability into future years.

LtCol John Donaldson is the A3 Director (Operations) of the A-Staff.

“The A-Staff directors took a vision and quickly translated it to fit within the **55th Wing**”, **Wing Commander Colonel Kristen Thompson** said.

(Both articles contributed by Association member Dan Jenkins, 1 February 2023. Some material from Sarpy County TIMES, and 55th Wing Public Affairs, edited by Moore. Note: Most of us would equate A-Staff to what was the Command staff, me thinks)

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FIGHTIN' FIFTY-FIFTY RETURNS TO PUERTO RICO

The 45th RS Wildcats' WC-135R CONSTANT PHOENIX, tail number 64-14836, and crews, began the “nuke sniffing” mission by conducting its first outside CONUS air-sampling sorties in USSOUTHCOM area during January-February 2023, staging from Luis Muñoz Marin International Airport in Puerto Rico.



The “Sniffer” has collected off the coast of South America during the past 30 years; but this is the first time in three decades the program collected so far south—essentially getting extended range and duration of collection beyond anything previously accomplished.

Aircraft #836 arrived to the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** in July 2022, replacing the burdensome and unreliable WC-135W/C #667 and #582, with the unholy nickname, ‘Lucifer’s Chariot’.

Flights were “baseline” collection missions to gather air samples used to establish what atmospheric radiation levels should look like under normal conditions.

(Contributed by **Jon Murphy**, a former **COBRA BALL Raven**, now a contractor supporting the **45th RS**; 16 February 2023. Edited by Moore.)

(An historical note here: The **55th SRW** operated **RB-50s** out of **Ramey AFB, PR**, from 1950-1952.):

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55th WING AND RAF 51 SQD JOINT CREW AT RED FLAG

Aircrew personnel from the RAF Waddington based 51 Squadron, conducted integrated crew training flying during Exercise RED FLAG from Nellis AFB, NV, in February.

The Royal Air Force aircrew joined with United States Air Force **55th Wing** aircrew to fly an RC 135 Rivet Joint intelligence gathering aircraft as part of the exercise.



This is the first time an integrated crew has flown on the exercise in several years and is one element of the newly expanded, but long-established, exercise.

(Attributable to **UK Open Source** by **George Allison**, February 2023.)

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55TH AIRCRAFT ARE TAIL SAFE

In early February USAF's Material Command ordered the inspection of all -135 variant aircraft, including about 400 KC-135 tankers and the entire **55th Wing** fleet of RC and WC models.

The urgent target of the inspections was the "vertical terminal fitting pins". Said pins connect the tail assembly to the aircraft fuselage. Failure of

the pins can cause the tail to separate and the planes to crash.

During the first week, 24 of 90 inspected aircraft had the faulty pins.

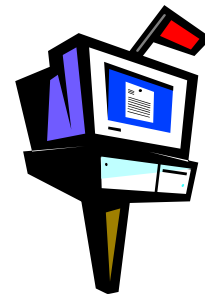
None were at Offutt.

In fact all of the **'Fightin' Fifty-Fifty** aircraft were cleared during the inspection. The pins in the tails were deemed safe.

(Material for this item was gleaned from extensive articles in the **Omaha World-Herald** by **Steve Liewer**, 16 and 19 February 2023.)

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LETTERS 'N STUFF



Max,

I really appreciated the picture of the (RB-47) navigator's station (*VO issue October 2022*).

It brought back lots of memories of my husband **Phillip W. Osborn** who was at Forbes 1960-67.

Mission planning, pre-comps, flight suits, TDY, RON, APO, to name a few.

Phil's grandchildren and great-grandchildren will enjoy seeing where their Papa spent many hours of his young life.

My daughters commented on the picture and my memories. They both recalled a sensory memory. As one daughter wrote, "a machine oil, electrical essence" when Phil came home from a mission.

Thanks for the memories.

Sincerely, **Jan Osborn**, Yreka, CA

(From e-mails 6 and 13 November 2022.)

(Maxigator note: For my family the essence was second-hand cigarette smoke (not mine), sweat and hydraulic fluid, and it was detectable three rooms away when I came through the door.)

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Max:

Just read the **55th Wing Association** newsletter last night. You do a great job!

Don Bacon, Papillion, NE. (*Former 55th Wing Commander*)

(*E-nailed 4 November 2022*)

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Hi Max:

Thanks, so much for keeping me on the mailing list.

My late husband **Phil** was very fond of **Jim McCoy** and had a great deal of respect for him. I would quite often find Phil and Jim with their heads together solving the world's problems.

Again, thank you for keeping me in the loop with the **55th**.

I still miss the Omaha/Offutt area.

Sincerely, **Kris Ford**, McGregor, TX

(*E-mailed 17 November 2022*)

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Max:

I enjoyed the **55th** history updates (*in the last issue of VO*). Thanks.

Sid Howard, Midwest City, OK.

(*A note: 3 December 2022.*)

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Dear Max,

What a pleasure it was receiving the winter issue of the Distinguished Flying Cross Society (DFCS) magazine. Their covering Strategic Air Command (SAC) RB-47 and RC-135 Reconnaissance programs was appreciated.

I was glad to see that the Department of Defense (DoD) coverage in the magazine article gave to those Combat Apple operations: (Quote) "The information provided by the Combat Apple operations were so important the DoD estimated that **75 percent of all useable SIGINT** intelligence collected in Southeast Asia against North Vietnamese targets was accomplished by the RC-135Ms of Combat Apple."

Pleased they included **John Drost**, **Wolfgang Samuel**, **Bill O'Hara**, and others in the DFCS Honor Roll, and listing your DFC's, as well. I'm also honored to be in the DFCS Honor Roll.

There were two highlights in my USAF career. One was the two and half years, (1969-1972), flying with the 82nd SRS at Kadena AB, Okinawa. I flew 103 Combat Apple missions and many other China and Russia border missions. I'm proud to have been awarded the DFC and five Air Medals.

Another highlight in my career was the four years I served in the Strategic Reconnaissance Center, SAC HQ, Offutt AFB, NE. During that time I flew with the **55th** for flight time requirements.

I know the many, many of us, including yourself, who flew those missions, were very proud to see this DFC Society coverage. We all flew with the very best.

Thanks, Max, for all you do as the **Association** newsletter editor.

Sincerely,

Gerald D. Walker, Maumelle, AR.

(*Letter written 23 January 2023.*)

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The local **55th** Tuesday morning **ROMEO** (*retired old men eating out*) breakfast group continues its tradition.

After some sparse attendance due to the holidays, cold weather, etc., this day, 10 January 2023, was a new year resurgence of sorts, and it brought a few out of hibernation for a fun breakfast gathering at the Papillion HyVee food court.



Front to back. Left side: **Mike Tabler**, **Dan Peterson**, **Bob Robeson**, **Mick Vinckier**, **Ham Kennedy**, **Roland Saenz**.

Right side: **John Tresmer**, **Jim Maloney**, **Hank Rieden**, **Ron Strong**, **Fred Schapker**, **Kathy Saenz** (partially hidden), **Jim Thomas**. Standing is **Barry Robeson**, **Bob's son**.

(*Text and photo submitted by Jim Maloney.*)

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COOPER JOINS OFFUTT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Congratulations to **Association** member, **John (Coop) Cooper**, who was recently selected to serve on the Offutt Advisory Council (OAC).

Coop's historical **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** affiliations, perspective as an RC-135 pilot and experience as a 338th CTS Commander brings a unique opportunity to represent and advocate for **Wing and Association's** interests.



As LtCol Cooper, he served on the **Association** BoD as an active duty representative from September 2009 to June 2011.

This OAC selection is the first in many years to come from our **55th** rank/file and we wish Coop well in this new challenge.

The OAC has a long history of supporting **Association** events such as our annual Birthday Ball and more.

We expect this trend to robustly continue with Coop's active service there.

*(From Spy V, 17 February 2023. Added info by Moore. Ed. Note: **Bill Ernst**, past president of the **Association** and current member of the BoD is a founding member of the OAC, circa 2001.)*

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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 7. 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, Dayton, **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.

We thank them all. Keep it up!

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(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.)



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EC-135C RESTORATION EC- 135 #049

After six years and over 32,000 volunteer hours, the interior and exterior restoration of our EC-135 "Looking Glass", #63-8049 was completed and the aircraft has been restored to its former glory (without wings and engines for floor space saving) and sits proudly in Hangar B at the Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum.



To learn more about the EC-135, visit: <https://www.sacmuseum.org/what-to-see/aircraft/ec-135-looking-glass/>

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Please visit the Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum's Facebook site to read about updates, and to make any comments/feedback directly to the Museum.

The Museum still needs more members interested in preserving the history of SAC. More funds are needed to prepare exhibits that will tell the public about the significant contributions of the SAC in winning the Cold War.

Funds are also needed to establish an account for future maintenance of aircraft 049 and its exhibits.

You can join, or renew memberships, at <https://sacmuseum.org/join-give/membership/>.

Your 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 project.

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TAPS



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AGRONIS, Gilbert, 91, 27 November 2022, Tulsa, OK; wife, **Ellen**. Gil was a long time **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW)** navigator in RB-47s at Forbes AFB, KS, thru the 1960s, then in RC-135s at Offutt AFB, NE, and on staff the next decade. After retiring he flew with the **55th** 'alumni' group at Tulsa in a special use -135 (with US Navy on its side) under government contract.

BACK George V., 85, 18 December 2022, Navarre, FL; married to **Gerrie** forever. George was an RB-47 EWO in the 343rd at Forbes. He was a member of the **LtCol Hobart Mattison's** crew

that was shot up by North Korean fighters in April 1965. They recovered successfully at Yokota AB, Japan. He moved to Offutt with the **Wing** in RCs in 1967. George also was in RCs at Kadena circa early 1970s. A talented graphic artist, he produced a three panel mural in Bldg 497, and other works of art.

(See following article.)

BAILEY, Bruce M. 87, 4 December 2022, South Lake, TX; married to **Fay** for 63 years. A native of Mississippi, he went to aviation cadet training in 1956, was commissioned and then assigned to Keesler AFB, MS, for electronic warfare officer (EWO) training. His first assignment in April 1958 was to the **55th SRW** at Forbes in RB-47s. He was a crew dog until the **Wing** moved to Offutt in 1967. *(See following tribute article.)*

BARRETT, Donald E., 77, 25 April 2022, Indian Trail, NC. Proceeded in death by his wife **Laura** in 2011. He was a 2nd ACCS communications officer (*the other guy, besides the general officer in charge, with the activation key*) on the EC-135 ABNCP (*Looking Glass*) battle staff at Offutt in the mid-1970s. He had strong ties to the area, having graduated in 1963 from Bellevue High School. His Offutt assignment included a one-year overlap with brother **Doug**, a 343rd/38th SRS navigator, and his wife **Lynn**.

BOND, Ronald M., 85, 5 February 2023, Bellevue, NE; married to **Suzanne** for 65 years. They met in the 6th grade. Ron served in the **55th** as a pilot in EC/RC/C-135s. He first was stationed at Offutt in 1967. After three tours in Vietnam and other duties, Ron returned to the **55th**. His last position before retiring in 1987 was with the Command Support Airlift (CSA) division as an aviator and scheduler. He then flew for the Army Corps of Engineers for 14 years and retired a second time.

CARVER, James I., II, 85, 13 September 2022, Columbia, MD; **Betsy** was his wife for 61 years. A native of West Virginia, he entered the Air Force in 1961 and became an EWO serving with the **55th** in RBs at Forbes, RCs at Offutt, then at Kadena. Jim also had a SE Asia tour in EB-66s at Korat AB. He had commander assignments at Mather AFB, CA, at RAF Chicksands, UK, at Kadena, and at Ft Meade, MD. He retired in 1988.

GAFFNEY, Edward J., 67, 12 January 2023, Bellevue, NE; his bride of 48 years, **Mary**. They met at Bellevue HS. Ed served as Chief, Recon Operations, 922nd Strat Sqd at Hellenicon AB, Greece prior to his assignment as an evaluator/instructor navigator in the 38th RS at Offutt in 1990. He subsequently was on the SAC command crew of Casey 01, 1992-95. After retirement in 1997, Ed continued his support of the 55th as a contract instructor with L3 and a systems engineer at Northrup Grumman.

LAMBERT, Clifford E., 80, 15 November 2022, Rapid City, ND; married to **Kay** for 60 years. They met while attending Ball State. A native Hoosier, he entered the Air Force in 1964 and completed pilot training. After a SE Asia tour he served in the 55th as an EC/RC pilot, and later as the assistant director of operations. After other command assignments at Ellsworth AFB, SD, and RAF Mildenhall, UK, he was the base commander at Lackland AFB, TX, when he retired in 1997.

REED, Thomas B., 87, 6 June 2022, Sedalia, CO; married to **Celia** for 58 years. They were wed in Topeka. Tom was an RB-47 navigator in the 343rd at Forbes during the 1960s. He moved with 55th to Offutt serving as an RC nav, then staff officer. Tom became an intel officer with a tour in Germany, then at Beale AFB, CA, and as an instructor at Lowry AFB, CO. After retiring from the Air Force, he continued in that capacity with Lockheed Martin until retiring again.

STOOP, Myrtle, 85, 22 December 2022, Spokane Valley, WA; wife of **Ken**. They were at Kadena in the late 1960s where Ken was an RC-135 navigator. He came to Offutt and was in the 2ACCS. Last assignment was as wing staff navigator at Fairchild AFB, WA.

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BRUCE BAILEY

A TRIBUTE IN TWO PARTS

(AKA: WING AND ASSOCIATION HISTORY)

PART ONE

LtCol Bruce M. Bailey, USAF Retired, served 12 years in the 55th SRW. After nine years as an RB-47 EWO at Forbes, he relocated with the **Wing** to Offutt before the new RC-135C models arrived. He did have a six month ‘break’ to work on

construction and testing of the special use RC-135E, “Lisa Ann.”

Colonel William (Bill) Riggs, then serving as wing commander at Lincoln AFB, NE, was hand-picked by the SAC DO, to lead and oversee the transition of the 55th in location, aircraft, personnel and mission. Bruce was the Wing Logistics Officer (Col Riggs’ right hand man) during this phase.

There was no “grand plan” by SAC, nor the 3902nd Air Base Group at Offutt, for this monumental tasking. Col Riggs, his staff, and Bailey literally had to elbow their way in and scrounge for nearly everything – space, materials, furniture, etc. Their main job was to prepare facilities for the new aircraft and the crews.

With no aircraft to fly, the crew members were dispersed across the 3902nd and other units in ‘attached’ duties to earn their pay and keep them occupied, as it were.

Here are Bruce’s (*edited*) words from April 2021: Wing HQ “*was in Bldg 497 along with nearly everything else. It was terribly crowded and inefficient. Colonel Riggs shared an office with operations. I was building and modifying like mad all over the base.*

The need for a Wing HQ was (clearly) evident. I had to run everything through the base (3902nd) and SAC HQ for approval.

They turned down our proposal and all looked lost. But I found a regulation that permitted going around SAC directly to USAF HQ.

*With Colpnel Riggs’ okay, I built a strong case for a (55th Wing) HQ and it came back **immediately approved**. I made a lot of enemies in SAC HQ and the (3902nd) air base group.*

They stayed on my case from then on, making approval an unreal nightmare on all future projects.

Colonel Ted Crouchly (3902nd CC) and I had a big showdown over the HQ building when the SAC brass came to see the new building.”

Once the main logistics tasks were done, and the newly-minted RCs arrived, Bruce was back as a Raven 1 EWO on the new RC-135Cs.

When the Electronic Recon Branch was established within the **Wing**, Bruce was on its



initial staff. He served there until, again in Bruce's words: "*Colonel Riggs could no longer fend off a barrage of overseas assignments with (my name on them).*"

He transferred to the 4252nd Strategic Wing at Kadena AB, Okinawa, in 1970. His assignment was in the Intelligence Division supporting the RC-135M COMBAT APPLE missions, and the SAC SR-71 program. The connection with the 55th continued as its aircraft and crews regularly deployed to the island.

Bruce's next assignment in 1974 was with the 100th Strat Recon Wing at Davis-Monthan, AZ (*not then under the 55th*) still in strategic reconnaissance operations with the U-2 and DC-130 aircraft missions.

He retired in 1976 and returned to Mississippi in the family business.

PART TWO

In retirement he found he could stay connected with his former **Wing** through the organization of EWO alumni and its periodic reunions.

The **Association** began in the late 1960s as an informal, loose-knit group of retired former 55th **Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW)** RB-50, RB-47 electronic warfare officers (EWOs) who had been stationed together over a period of years. Bruce was an active and influential member of the group from its inception.

Initially, the organization was called the 55th **ELINT Association** due to the nature of its membership made up primarily of former EWOs (Ravens, Crows).

The "founding father" was Colonel (USAF-Retired) **Bob Dibbell**, a pilot by trade, who acted as president, secretary/treasurer, newsletter editor, et al. In short, a one-man board of directors for nearly 30 years.

Bruce, who had been the **Association's** ex-officio historian, took the helm in 1991 when Bob 'retired'. Again, a one-man BoD. His tenure saw the membership grow in numbers and included more pilots and navigators, and the reunions got bigger.

It became evident over time that the organization needed a more official structure and governance, (*and future name changes to indicate inclusiveness*) and Bruce's dedication laid the foundation.

He stepped down in 1994 in favor of an *ad hoc* committee of volunteer members who planned the incorporation and bylaws for what evolved into what is now the **55th Wing Association**.

While attending reunions, the telling of tales ("*There I was....*"), viewing memorabilia and scrapbooks, etc., he decided someone needed to collect and preserve as much of the ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*** history as possible. That someone was him.

That led to his writing of two history books and numerous articles for aviation, historical and technical publications.

He also wrote (*under a nom de plume*) a novel loosely based on an RB-47 deployment to Incirlik AB, Turkey in 1962.

But the real gem and result of that mission, vision and dedication was a pictorial history volume titled ***WE SEE ALL***, the 55^{th's} long standing motto.

Over a three year period of planning, research, gathering materials, making layouts, writing text, and toil, Bruce procured a personal loan and self-published 1500 copies of the book in 1982.

Eventually sales and demand for the book slowed and Bruce donated the remainder of his inventory to the **Association**.

Association presidents have presented copies to every new wing commander and other dignitaries since the mid-1980s.

The tome also has become a collector's item for aviation and recon history buffs.

The complete work is now available for viewing on the rejuvenated **Association** web site (55wa.org).

Bruce Bailey's legacy lives on.

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WE SEE ALL – THE SEQUEL

The 55th **Wing Association** is spearheading an effort to produce a follow-on volume to Bruce Bailey's *We See All*, now a rare hard copy item, but available for free (donations accepted) in the BX as a PDF.

Most veteran **55thers** know Bruce privately published his book in 1982, which covered the strat recon missions from 1946 through the transition to RC-135s, and the move of the 55th from Forbes AFB, KS. to Offutt AFB, NE. in 1966-67.

The new book will pick up the story in the late 1960s and bring it up to the present.

Tentatively titled *Videmus Omnia: 80 Years at the Front*, the book is being edited by the new web master, Dave Connaughton, pilot of the 82nd SRS, the cartoonist who created the crew cartoons that appear on the web site BX page.

Dave edited the *Dodo*, a humor newsletter at USAFA, and the *Harbus* newspaper at Harvard Business School.

The material, we hope, will come from you! To contribute, please review the draft (which will be continuously updated on the web site) and submit suggestions, photos, and articles to support@55wa.org.

Specifically: Does anyone have any info on the 55th operations in Grenada 1983, Panama 1989-90, Kosovo 1998-99, or Open Skies 1989-2020?

We have stories in Memory Lane for many air bases, but I would appreciate facts, dates, people, stories for Offutt, Shemya, Thule, RAF Mildenhall, Kadena, Eielson, RAF Upper Heyford, Incirlik, and Souda Bay.

If so, please send to the link above.

We plan to publish before June 2023.

Thanks in advance! *Dave*.

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FIGHTIN' FIFTY-FIFTH MURAL

(This article was originally published in the August 2018 issue of Videmus Omnia to educate members about a 'lost' part of the history of Bldg 497 and George Back's artistry. It is re-entered here to honor George's dedicated work. Max)

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The three panel mural once resided on the south wall of the briefing room in Bldg 497, which at the time was occupied by the 343rd SRS and the recon operations directorate (DOR) secured area.

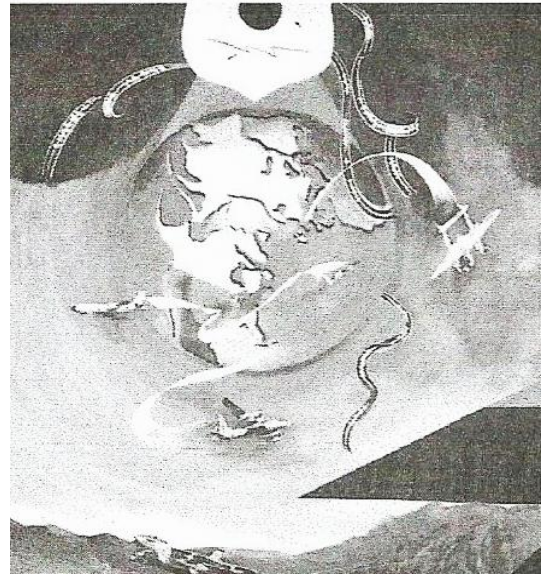
As noted previously, it was the work of Captain **George Back**.

(In photo at left)

His recollection is that he created it in the spring of 1967, not long after the **55th SRW** had moved from Forbes AFB, KS, to Offutt. It was done of his

own volition and during off duty time (mostly).

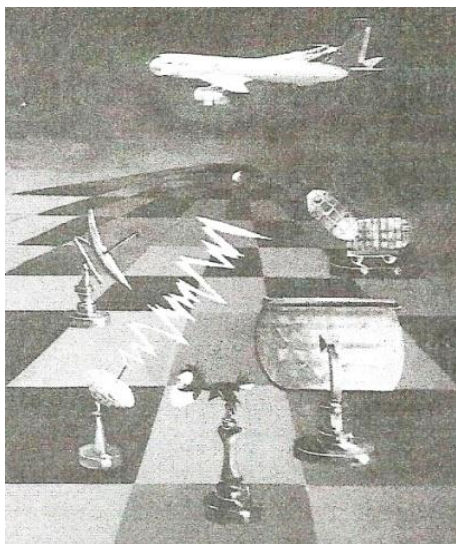
Three plywood panels covered in canvas were laid out on the floor. The panels were each eight feet high and four feet wide, and in full color (*"the paint had maybe some beer mixed in."*).



The center panel depicted *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* aircraft from different eras (P-51, P-38, RB-50, RB-47, RC-135), flying from the various operating locations around the globe during WWII and the Cold War, all under the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing** globe and camera shield, and the motto ribbon, "*Videmus Omnia*" (*Latin for We See All*).



The left panel displayed an RC-135C over what was then SAC Headquarters, Bldg 500, at Offutt AFB, NE, then named for **General Curtis E. LeMay**. (Now the Colonel William E. Riggs Bldg, **55th Wing HQ**.)



Another RC in the right panel represented the operational aspect of the 55th global reconnaissance mission. The checkerboard design is emblematic of the Cold War “chess games”, and with the sleepy-eyed crow and a variety of electronic targets as chess pieces. *(All photos from George Back)*

(This editor witnessed the removal of the mural’s three panels when Bldg 497 was undergoing renovation, circa 1988, after over 20 years in place.

The plan at the time was to send them to the SAC Museum, which was at the north end of Offutt then. However, now, no one seems to know what actually happened to them, and the panels are in the black hole of wherever.

Members of the Association have made multiple inquiries and diligent searches of the mural’s whereabouts over the years, but to no avail.

It is shameful that such an historic work of art is lost.)

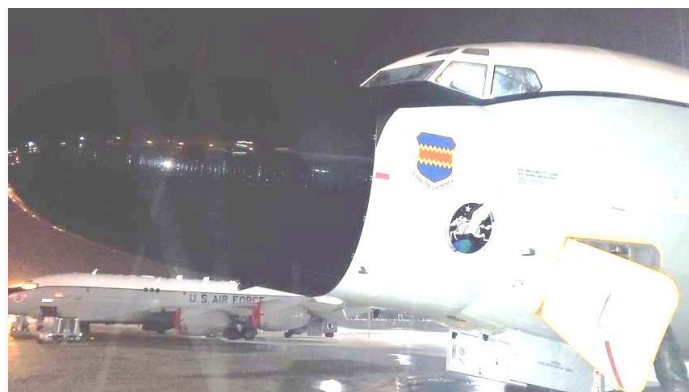
If any readers have credible knowledge on the paintings location, we would be most grateful to learn of it.

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55th WING AIRCRAFT TAIL #4133 TO UNDERGO YET ANOTHER MODIFICATION

Boeing TC-135W (serial 62-4133) is pictured under darkness at Offutt AFB, NE, before departing for Greenville-Majors Airport, TX, to join the USAF's Big Safari Program on 14 February, where

it will be reassigned and redesignated as an NC-135 platform.



The aircraft was flown to Texas by members of the 238th Combat Training Squadron, which will become responsible for the testing of surveillance equipment modifications, which, if successful, will be added to the USAF’s fleet of RC-135S/U/V/W reconnaissance aircraft at Offutt.

This is not the first time that 62-4133 has been operated in a test role since it completed its maiden flight in July 1962. In 1967, the aircraft was redesignated as an EC-135B when it received a 10ft radome nose extension, and was fitted with equipment from the EC-135N Apollo Range Instrument Aircraft (ARIA).

It was then converted into a TC-135S in 1985 and served as a training aircraft for the RC-135 Cobra Ball fleet. At that time, those aircraft did not have the ‘chipmunk cheeks’ fitted to the forward fuselage that is a synonymous feature of the RC-135 fleet today. Until now, the aircraft had served as part of the 45th Reconnaissance Squadron at Offutt in this same role.

Aircraft 62-4133 will take over the Big Safari test role from NC-135W (serial 61-2666), which has been responsible for testing equipment for the RC-135 fleet since the mid-1990s. That aircraft – which is the sole remaining C-135 in the USAF inventory equipped with Pratt & Whitney TF-33 turbofan engines – will be retired once 62-4133 becomes fully available.

Its retirement follows a series of divestments of a similar nature, including the two OC-135B Open Skies aircraft, and the WC-135C/W Constant Phoenix fleet, which was used for atmospheric testing and collection purposes.

The introduction of 62-4133 as the new NC-135 test aircraft will bring the Big Safari Program in line with the remainder of the fleet.

In 2019, 62-4127 became the first aircraft to have 'Baseline Charlie' installed, which was the fleet-wide glass cockpit modification. This was the first sign of alternatives to 61-2666 being used to test RC-135 fleet modifications.

(Attributable to: Luca Chadwick, Key Aero,
18 February 2023. Edited by Moore.)

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ASSOCIATION BX

Major changes and additions have been made to the **55th Wing Association "BX"**. Management is by **Dennis Haun**. He established a new vendor and inventory of items for the membership.

The inventory makes for great gifts for birthdays, the holiday season, and other occasions for current and former ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth members***.

The items are now viewable in color on the new web site BX section.

The BX now has available to **Association** membership the following items:

Long Sleeve **55th Association** ¼ Zip Pullovers
White, Royal Blue, Red, Navy & Grey. (S-XXXL). Cost \$43 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$49.50).

Short Sleeve **55th Association** Polos
White, Red, Royal Blue, Grey, Dark Navy. (S-XXXL). Cost \$40 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$46.50).

Long Sleeve **55th Association** Shirt
Red, White, Navy Blue. (S-XXXL).
Cost \$63 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$69.50).



Long sleeve button down-shirt



Short sleeve polo



Long sleeve pullover

55th Wing Association Hats

Navy Blue, Red, Grey (Adjustable).
Cost \$20 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$26.50).

55th Wing Association

Hot/Cold Tumblers Blue.
Cost \$30 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$36.50)

(Item photos by Haun)

Members wishing to purchase any of the above listed items please contact:

Denny Haun, 918 Oxford Circle
Papillion, NE, 68046

Please make checks for the full amount of purchase to: **55th Wing Association**.

NOTE: Procedures are being developed to use the accounting system Square for future on-line payments. More to follow!

Questions/Comments please contact Denny Haun at papahaun@cox.net.

Members should/could load up on this stuff before the next reunion in September.

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55TH FASHION PINS

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

Gents and ladies, the pin makes a great birthday or anniversary accessory gift, or holiday stocking stuffer. Classy but not expensive.



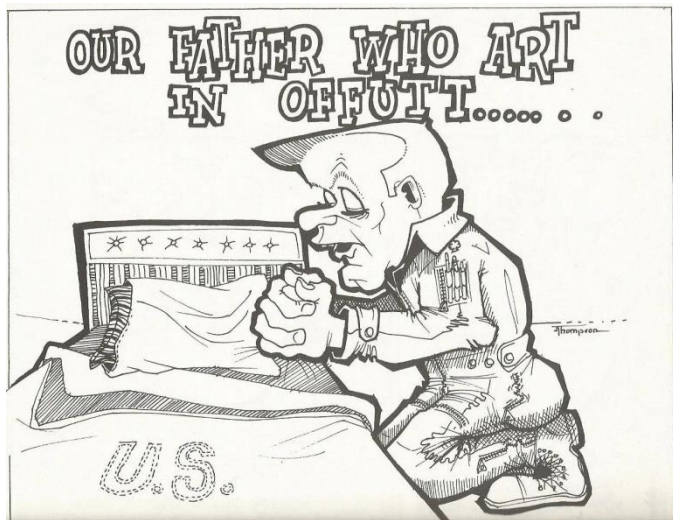


(Shown actual size) The Association does **not** sell these pins and receives **no** money from the sales. But, as a service for those who wish to possess same: Erwin's Jewelers, offers them and you can purchase directly from the store.

Send order requests to 223 W. Mission Ave, Bellevue, NE, 68005, 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 former owner, the late **Frank Kumor**, was a long time member and ardent supporter of the Association. His daughter, **Rebecca Zurcher**, is now the proprietor.

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(With permission of Jerry R. Thompson, noted SAC bomber pilot and SAC HQ habituate.)

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*Be very, very good to your children.
They get to choose your nursing home.*

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NEWSLETTER STAFF

It has been brought to this editor's attention, that most professional and organizational publications/newsletters have a listing of the publication staff.

The *Videmus Omnia* has rarely done that, nor considered that it was necessary. But, to fill a square, here you have it:

Publisher/Executive Editor/Content Editor/Lead Writer/Proofreader/Photographer/Janitor:

Max R Moore

Major Contributor: Spy V and his posse.

Assistant Proofreader/Moral Support/Main Caregiver: Carol R. Moore

Staff: Acer computer, Windows 10 (*Yep, that's it, MSWord (with spell checker)*)

Data base/Mailing Labels: Membership Chair Mo Krishna.

Treasurer (pays the bills): Michael Cook

Printer: Digital Express, Omaha, NE, Justin Brummels, Asst Manager.



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*Wing staff meeting in session.
(Cartoon by Dave Connaughton.)
(First of a series.)*

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You should never say anything to a woman that even remotely suggests that you think she is pregnant, unless you see an actual baby emerging from her body at that moment.

There comes a time when you should stop expecting others to make a big deal about your birthday.

That time is age eleven.

Dave Barry, Humorist, Author



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 Mohan Krishna, Membership Chairman, at volvomo@gmail.com, or at the above mailing address.**

