

FROM Walt Schrecker

Here's my memoir of the January 1980 "First" Birthday Ball:

I was a few months into the job of 55th SRW Stan/Eval Division Chief, having replaced Barry Walrath, USAF Academy Class of '63. Then Colonel Regis F.A. Urschler, 55th SRW/CC, had installed me in that position.

Some background: Regis had "shortened" my tour in the Math Department at USAFA with a phone call asking me to come to Offutt AFB when he was assuming command of that Wing. As info, I had been selected to go to the Math Dept-sponsored grad program to get a PhD and return as an associate professor! I was able to finesse my way out of it and go to Omaha.

Harry Moore was Ops Officer of the 343rd SRS flying squadron when I got there. Harry (exhorting ACs to fly a pop-up higher HQ mission): "OK, you guys are like a bunch of goddamn seagulls! Ya have to throw rocks at you to get you to go fly. Then you go and sh** on me!" Bill Bima was the Sq/CC. Bill Klausner was on the Wing Staff ... OLD 82nd SRS HOME COMING!

As noted, I was the Wing Div Chief ... 60 evaluators ... and the SAC Combat Eval Group "on final approach," when Regis called me over to his office. The group of EWs in the newly-stood-up 343rd EW Sq had been working on the "Birthday Ball." Reggie was fuming ... "pissed" ... at their lack of progress. He had just fired all of them. He wanted me to take charge of the event's planning and execution.

I accepted, of course, ... while having an anxiety disorder and nearly "sh**ing my pants!" CEVG was supposed to visit the wing, and I'd never done anything like this.

I did, however, know I had to execute a "vision" that existed in the "mind of the commander"—Regis! I immediately went to the group of CROWs, whom I knew and with whom I had often flown, and re-hired them to get up to speed. I also enlisted Mary Schrecker and many of the wives in the Division and 38th Squadron along with a few of their husbands.

The base artist had given Reg a sketch/drawing depicting an Aviator in Sunglasses, A-2 Jacket, 50-mission-crush wheel hat, with an MG T sports car, and a P-51 (go figure) in the background. It generated the theme: "A Flyer's Birthday Dream!" I also became closely acquainted with "June" of the Offutt O'Club management and the leadership of the SAC Museum.

What unfolded over the course of the month or so, was: near daily meetings with Reg to get his marching orders; guidance in



crafting his menu selection with June along with decorations at the club; and convincing the SAC museum to allow some exhibits to be taken to the club for the historic displays.

Decorations were on a tight budget. Mary and the wives decorated the tables with simple, but elegant, "returnable" mirrored tiles and a single red rose as center pieces along with June providing candles. A reception room with Museum displays, Sam Kinkaid, Ray's wife, in charge of Flags, and an ICE Sculpture depicting the Wing crest, all came together. I do recall a kerfuffle in returning some the Museum's pieces that was eventually resolved: someone made off with one of the jackets and after some diligent "Crewdog investigation" it was returned.

Lt Col Ned ("Nasty Ned" a Harry Moore inspired moniker) Wilson, Wing Exec, along with Lt Col Max Moore, the Wing Staff and Protocol provided access, mentoring and much needed assistance with invitations for former 55th members going back to WWII, and much appreciated insights into "What the Boss really needs for you to do!" The speaker was (then Lt Gen) Richard Lawson who had been commander, of SAC's 8th Air Force at Barksdale Air Force Base, LA. At the time of the Ball, he was director for plans and policy, J-5, OJCS, Washington, D.C. Great off-the-cuff, mellifluous commanding presentation: He'd been in the Iowa National Guard and a boxer. He shared his notion of leadership paraphrasing GEN George Marshall:

"When conditions are difficult, the command is depressed and everyone seems critical and pessimistic, you must be especially cheerful and optimistic.

When evening comes and all are exhausted, hungry, and possibly dispirited, particularly in unfavorable weather at the end of a march or in battle, you must put aside any thought of personal fatigue and display marked energy in looking after the comfort of your organization, inspecting your lines, and preparing for tomorrow.

As Lawson put it: Don't eat until your troops have been fed. Don't sleep until your lines are secured and your troops have been bedded down. And KEEP THEM OUTA THE HOT SUN."