

ML.87.Palm Memorial Notes

We, the 55th, lost an RB-47 shot down by the Soviets in the Barents Sea some sixty miles offshore, killing four of the six crew members. The two survivors were picked up by Russian boats and spent six months in solitary confinement in the infamous Lubyanka Prison, subject to constant interrogations and deprivations in the Soviet attempt to force them to admit they had overflowed and violated Soviet territory, which they refused to do.

The NAV and CP, who were close friends of mine in the 343rd, were finally released as a 'good-will' gesture to the new president, Kennedy, in January '61 with no apologies or admission by the Soviets of a wrongful act.

The Russians recovered the AC's body from his raft and returned it to the US, where his Algerian born wife, Nadine, demanded to see the body and identify her husband, Captain Bill Palm. She asked me to be a Pall Bearer at his funeral in Arlington.

The 55th was located at Forbes AFB, Topeka, KS where there is today a monument to the crew in Palm Park close to where the Palm family lived. The Palm Trophy is awarded to a 55th crew each year.

The CP and I had many private discussions about his incarceration, details of which I'm confident were never publicly revealed and which I'm still not comfortable sharing.

The incident was discussed at the United Nations Security Council with acrimony, accusations and denials between the US (Adlai Stevenson) and the Soviet rep. Stevenson made an accusation and advised the Soviet Rep, "I am prepared to wait for your answer until Hell freezes over." No answer was forthcoming even after we produced recordings of the voice comms between the Russian pilot and the ground controller.