

ML.91.Additional Thoughts Inspired by ML.90

Don't forget Prince Albert pipe tobacco, Tom.

Tom is correct. Unfortunately, the returning old heads were treated as newbies and not respected. These guys had more Elint Recce experience than any crewmember or staff member in the 55th at Forbes. They had been in the 55th at Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico when the 55th was stationed there.



I well remember Ray and Tom Sr., Bill Boughton, Bill 'Willy' Lowman, Don Grigsby, Otto 'Bill' Bobo, Carl Seely and so many more whose faces I see clearly but whose names are now beginning to fade away, who brought such a treasure of 55th history to their new duty station at Forbes. These are the guys who were referred to, and immortalized as, the 'Guys in the Mink Bow Ties' by Johnny Watson, an expat WW II valve trombone player (ever seen one?) who had been with MacArthur's band and stayed on, married a wonderful Japanese lady, and formed the Band known as the 'Kampai Kings' playing the YOKOTA 'O' Club Tuesday through

Saturday nights with a Sunday afternoon Jazz session and free champagne cocktails and Bloody Marys. My WW II Nav described it thusly: "Regis," he said, "every night at the 'O' Club is like Saturday night and Saturday night is like 'New Year's Eve.'" No better description. The New York steak on the menu was a buck twenty-five, and drinks were two bits except during daily 'Happy Hour' when they were two for a quarter! I kid you not.

This group of RB-50G crewmembers made a name for themselves at the Club as happy-go-lucky guys who knew they were performing a highly classified and especially dangerous mission, already having lost an aircraft and crew, when they decided they would wear mink bow ties. Johnny Watson so loved these guys he wrote a song in their honor: 'Who's The Guy In The Mink Bow Tie.' He produced a record with that song a copy of which I treasure today, if can find it. But not my own 'Mink-Bow-Tie,' long gone with so much forgotten 55th history.

[You can buy one today for \$30 at ETSY. - ed]

Those are just some of the memories I have of the guys who came up from Biggs and the RB-50's in 1955, transitioning into the RB-47s and proving to be the respected professionals they were and no longer the newbies. They truly were unique and made a huge impression on this then young Lt with their esprit, pride in their mission and pride in their squadron, the 343rd.



And then we have the ERB-29 brought up from Biggs manned by a SAC Select Crew who never again flew the aircraft parked on the ramp in front of the 343rd, meanwhile retaining their spot promotions, to everyone's wonder and awe, until the aircraft was flown to the boneyard in Tucson.

- Reg Urschler

