

**Colonel Merlin F. (Steve) Stevens**, USAF-Retired, is the **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** Hall of Fame inductee for 2006. He served with distinction in four separate tours with the **55<sup>th</sup> Strategic Reconnaissance Wing** at Offutt AFB, NE, during a span of over 17 years.

In March 1967 as a member of the 343<sup>rd</sup> SRS, he was in the first cadre of pilots to qualify in the 55<sup>th</sup>'s new RC-135C aircraft. He early on demonstrated his leadership and aviation skills as an aircrew commander.

Following assignments to Eielson AFB, AK, and Clark AFB, P.I., he returned to the **55<sup>th</sup> SRW** in July 1972 with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Command & Control Squadron (ACCS) as an instructor/evaluator pilot in the EC-135C flying the Strategic Air Command's Airborne Command Post missions.

In April 1974 Colonel Stevens was **specifically** selected to be the chief of the command crew flying 'Casey 01' for Commanders in Chief of Strategic Air Command, Generals John Meyer and Russell Dougherty at Offutt AFB, NE.

Colonel Stevens' third tour with the 55<sup>th</sup> began in December 1975 as operations officer of the 2ACCS. He was commander of the squadron from June 1977 to June 1978.

His following assignment was to the Pentagon, Joint Staff, Worldwide Military Command and Control Systems, Plans and Requirements Division, working E-4A/B Program (the mission of which was now part of the **55<sup>th</sup> SRW**). During this period, he was promoted to colonel two years below-the-zone.

After attending the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in Washington, DC, and another assignment at the Pentagon, Colonel Stevens was once again reassigned to the **55<sup>th</sup> SRW** in July 1981 in his **most important capacities**. He served as the Deputy Commander for Operations, Vice Wing Commander, and was the **Commander** the Wing from November 1982 through October 1984. He retired in April 1986 culminating an outstanding 30-year career serving his country.

Colonel Stevens is a command pilot with over 8,000 hours in EC/RC/KC-135 airframes. His decorations and awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal; the Legion of Merit; Distinguished Flying Cross, with Oak Leaf Cluster (OLC); Meritorious Service Medal, 1 OLC; Air Medal, 7 OLCs; AF Commendation Medal, 2 OLCs.

**Of very special note is that the inspired leadership, dedication to duty and exemplary professionalism demonstrated throughout his career, presented Colonel Stevens as a superb role model and mentor to numerous officers and NCOs who served with and under him. His personal example motivated many of them to follow his footsteps, several of whom remained with, or later returned to, the Wing to become another generation of leaders in the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*. That is Colonel Stevens' most positive and lasting legacy.**