



# *Videmus Omnia*

## **55<sup>th</sup> WING ASSOCIATION**

NEWSLETTER

APRIL

2024

### **THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

*(AKA: Prezgram)*

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

“Cleared for takeoff, RUNWAY '24!” Your **Association's** annual takeoff roll has begun, anticipating another exciting year ahead. In Calendar Year 24's first Quarter, we have already locally experienced key events recognizing our historic heritage and strong bond with current ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*** members.

Specifically, and fortunately, the **Association's** annually planned holiday reception at the Riggs (Bldg. 500) North Museum was targeted for 2023's final week between Christmas and New Year's 2024; yet postponed to 2024's first week. The postponement, maximized attendance for key **Wing** senior leaders and **Association** alums vacationing during the holiday season. Lesson learned!

Expect future **Association**-sponsored holiday Open Houses will be ASAP after a new year begins. On the heels of that event, planning for the 2024 **55<sup>th</sup> Wing Birthday Ball** and committee meetings (with several **Association** members participating) is on-going. Once again, we expect a spectacular Ball to culminate the 2024 Heritage Week.

Of note, Heritage Week timing will be slightly different this year. The **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** is celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the base designation as “Offutt Field”. Additionally, this year, the 45<sup>th</sup> RS celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; and the 338<sup>th</sup> CTS celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> year. CONGRATULATIONS!

To celebrate Offutt Field's centenary, the **Wing** will host a multi-band concert on the base Parade Field Friday afternoon, 10 May. With our Birthday Ball scheduled for Saturday evening, 11 May (La Vista Conference Center), that means Heritage Week timing has to adjust somewhat.

This year, traditional activities such as the Palm Trophy presentation, Hall of Fame induction(s) and ***Tales of the 55<sup>th</sup>*** will be on Thursday afternoon, 9 May. As of now, at a TBD location; but details will soon follow.

Plan ahead to attend all the events. Due to this adjusted schedule, please take time to also personally visit (doors are open 24/7/365) the **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** Museum sometime on Friday morning before the concert. You will definitely enjoy reminiscing on YOUR part in the **Wing's** vaunted history! Hope you/yours plan to attend all 2024 Heritage Week events.

Of course, the “Sun Never Sets on the ***Fightin' Fifty-Fifth!***” As such, expect even more **Association** events on our 2024 flight path (especially to plan for our concurrent **2025 Wing** Birthday Ball/ Omaha Reunion celebrating the **55<sup>th</sup>'s** 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary) admirably guided by our recently renewed Board of Directors highlighted in the previous “Max Missive” (*December 2023, Reunion Recap*). (*See Board of Directors Directory, page 7.*)

One notable near-term headwind event will be an **Association**-sponsored Museum reception to kick-off BIG SAFARI's RC-135 Program Review hosted this year by the **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** in July.

Sadly, the sun does set on too many of our illustrious members; so please take time to reflect well on this edition's TAPS section. Many of our notable colleagues and spouses have taken their last flight. We honor them, their families and their service. As always,

*Videmus Omnia, Spy V*

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## 55<sup>th</sup> WING ASSN HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

This annual event was held on Thursday 4 January at 1500 in the **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** Museum in the Riggs Building (#500). It was attended by well over 50 *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* alumni, active duty troops, families and friends.

Light refreshments were served in a casual atmosphere for a couple of hours as people came and went.

Opening feature was a video of **55<sup>th</sup> Wing Commander Colonel Mark "Chili" Howard** conducting a complete tour of the **55<sup>th</sup>** headquarters facilities. The usual mingling, camaraderie and 'there I was' stories ensued.

**It was a memorable event.**



*This is an attempt to ID those in this wide angle photo of some who attended (32).*

*Back row on stage, L-R: Jeff Johnson, Tom Miller, Joe Spivey, John Cooper, Chris Canada, Ham Kennedy, Michael Cook, Jim Hughes and Bruce Mundie.*

*Front row (sort of), L-R: Dave Patton, Mike Hoskins, Mo Krishna, Mark "Ski" Borytsky, Shawn Schaefer, Lori Hinderer, Wes Thibodeaux, Dave "Tiny" Wolfe, T. Kearny Vertner, Max Moore, Colonel Howard, (on wheels, the late) Steve Stevens, Dan Peterson, Jessica Chavez, Jim Maloney, John Freeman, Mike Tabler, John Johnson, Paul Miller, "Wiz" Wisnewski, Ryan Wiebbecke, Carlton Knight, Dan Jenkins. Whew!*

\* \* \* \* \*

As you might imagine, there were MANY RAVE reviews for the 4 January **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** OPEN HOUSE. It would NEVER have gone so well without these personal contributions, namely:

- Carlton Knight and Dan Jenkins for the continuous tweaks to the Museum and muscles to transport supplies to/from Riggs North counter and cleaning before/after.
- Mo Krishna for his adept handiwork to get display items properly hung in advance, and managing the computer/theater videos.
- Coach Hoskins for Museum additions, flag coordination, allowing possession of the OPEN HOUSE staging room.
- **Shaney** and **Lori** for masterfully preparing, displaying and serving at the reception counter.
- Stick Miller for bringing **Kevin**—and the ice.
- Jessica Chavez for being the new "spearhead" for the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* history.
- Finally, many thanks to Chili (**Wing CC**) and A-Ron (**Wing DC**) for adding a personal touch to the occasion—with welcoming arms.

WELL DONE and THANKS!!!

Joe Spy V

# 55<sup>th</sup> WING ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES, 17 JANUARY 2024

President Spivey hosted the meeting locally at Calvert Systems at 1500 CST with access also by Microsoft Teams and TELCON Bridge. Opening was delayed five minutes to allow attendees to join via zoom.

In-person Attendees: Kennedy, Johnson, Maloney, Spivey

Virtual Attendees: Acquero, Dugie, Kelly, Marlin, Moore, Siniscalchi

Meeting kicked off with a welcome to new BoD members: **Acquero, Johnson, Marlin** and **Siniscalchi**. Following intros, a short review of recent **Association** activities including the 2023 CSprings Reunion, Veterans Day wreath presentation, and 2024 Holiday Open House were discussed.

Reunion: Spivey (OPR) covered the need to incorporate recent membership-approved changes to the By-Laws including:

- **Emeritus BoD status**/quals (five years or more service)/recognition (plaques with example shown to BoD). Plaques will be distro-ed now under the agreement that all will be brought back for photos ICW 2024 Heritage Week/Birthday Ball.
- BoD Acceptance of two **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** reps if those alums continue to serve as GS: **Hoskins** and **Johnson**.
- Moving **Association** incorporated status from Florida to Nebraska: No progress to date.
- Lifetime membership: Agreement; but no fee determined, as yet. Top contender is \$550.
- Allowing non-**55<sup>th</sup>** Vets from 82 SRS, 95 SRS, 6 SW, etc. to join. No action needed—allowed.
- Identified next **Association** reunion to be in **Omaha in 2025**—the **Wing's** 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary. TBD date and place, but should resolve by February.
- Regional responsibilities for new BoD structure: National Capitol Region (NCR) (Dugie/McMahon), Rocky Mts (Ross), Southeast/NCR-assist (Marlin), Midwest (OMA-based members), Texas (Siniscalchi), Arizona (Acquero).

Veterans Day: Good attendance and was glad **Jim Thomas** could do the honors.

2024 Holiday Open House:

- Good attendance evidenced by recently distro-ed photos.
- New **Wing** Historian (HO) **Jessica Chavez** will soon start coordinating with **Association** and PA to conduct oral interviews of outstanding events as seen through alum eyes. Will not start until o/a 1 April 2024.
- **Wing/CC (Chili Howard)** and DC (**A-ron Gray**) were given **Association** bolo ties #1/2 respectively. Greatly appreciated and will be added to the new BX inventory. Kudos to Maloney for production.
- Chili also confirmed the **Wing** is 100% behind this year's annual **Wing Birthday Ball, 11 May**. Expect planning sessions to begin the week of 29 January. Large venue is reserved.
- Yellow light for **Association** to "possess" the office outside the Museum for storage, working area, coffee lounge, overflow, etc. More to follow.

Officer reports:

- Membership: Krishna was tied up with **Wing** support. More to follow later.
- Treasurer: Cook unavailable due to family issue. As in recent years, Jeanes is auditing 2023 accounts. **Bob Reehorn** donated \$200 honoring the 2023 Reunion. Approx \$1500 to be moved from Square account to **Association** banking (Krishna has for action).
- Secretary: Ross was on travel.
- Hall of Fame Committee: Nomination process sent. Kennedy confirmed ready to start evals NLT 14 March 2024.
- Johnson: Reported on potential USAF/ACC/16AF/55WG org changes under discussion. Will pass more once way-ahead is determined.

Submitted 1/24/24:

Joe Spivey, President

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## MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING STATION AWARDS ASSOCIATION

On 2 January 2024, **Major Kate Jensen** (Commander, Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS), Omaha) presents a recognition certificate to the **55<sup>th</sup> Wing Association** expressing “deepest gratitude and appreciation” for our support over the summer 2023.

During that time, MEPS officer manning was limited for enlistment swearing in/inductions ceremonies. MEPS worked with the **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** to reach out to the **Association** to fill the void using retired officers to complete the much-needed task.



President Joe Spivey accepted the award on behalf of the **Association**.

The certificate is proudly displayed on the **Association** wall in *Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth’s* Museum (Riggs North, Bldg. 500).

Many thanks to everyone who helped in this effort. Spy V.

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## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP CEREMONY

By Ryan Hansen, *55<sup>th</sup> Wing Public Affairs*

Local, state and federally elected officials joined with the Bellevue, Omaha and Sarpy County Chambers of Commerce to commemorate their longstanding partnerships with leaders from Offutt AFB during a ceremony 9 February 2024. The event was attended by hundreds of local dignitaries, active duty troops, civilians and retirees.

The officials signed a community partnership memorandum, which was a symbolic gesture that highlighted the past, while pledging to continue working together to build upon in the future what is already firmly established.

“It’s incredibly important that we all have extraordinary gratefulness in our hearts for one another and our relationships,” said **Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen**.

“The highest calling in government service is keeping us safe and making sure that plane gets the bad guys,” he added while pointing at the RC-135V/W Rivet Joint parked just outside the bay door of the Bennie Davis Maintenance Facility.

“That aircraft right there, finds bad guys and tells good guys quickly, where the bad guys are,” said Colonel Mark Howard, **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** commander. “It’s a big deal that we celebrate this relationship. We can’t do anything without (*solid community*) support.”

“Everywhere I’ve been in the state of Nebraska during the last three years, countless times I’ve been asked, ‘what’s the one thing you love about Nebraska?’ ” Pillen said, “The answer is, the people”



*Governor Pillen and Colonel Howard sign the memorandum to commemorate the longstanding relationship between Offutt and the local communities.*

*Photo by Chad Watkins, 55th Wing Public Affairs.*

Originally established as Fort Crook in 1896 and designated as Offutt Field in 1924, before becoming Offutt Air Force Base in 1948, the installation has traditionally enjoyed overwhelming support from the local community, which has become the envy of many communities and installations across the country.

The non-binding memorandum focused on strengthening partnership, building trust, resolving conflicts, leveraging resources, increasing capacity, as well as recovery and response.

“We have a unique mission, there’s only one of these in the Air Force, that’s why a lot of people get to stay here,” Howard said. “The deeper reason though, and I want to emphasize this, is that you fall in love with it.”

With more than 11,000 military and civilian members, and an annual economic impact of \$2.7 billion, Offutt plays a crucial role in the local and state economies.

“What goes on at this base, with all of the people and all of the different responsibilities, it is imperative we support them to ensure that we win,” Pillen said. “We’re all in on making sure that quality of life is enhanced, and that this is a home away from home is then your long-term home.”

*(Edited by Moore.)*



*Association President Spivey, Board Member Jim Maloney and Association Vice President Mo Krishna attended the event.*



## 55<sup>TH</sup> OPERATION GROUP STANDS UP DET 1

**LtCol Kelsey (Gazer) Bryant** took command of the **55th** Operations Group (OG) Detachment 1, during an assumption-of-command ceremony at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), 17 January 2024.



*At left: Colonel Rachel, LtCol Bryant at right.  
Ops Group Superintendent CMSgt Tabitha Sanders, center.*

The Det's mission is to respond more quickly to long-standing and ever-increasing combatant command (CCMD) and national intelligence requirements in the Indo-Pacific region.

**Colonel Derek Rachel**, **55th** Ops Group Commander, Offutt AFB, NE, said that “the Det will support our various **55th Wing** missions, and all of our aircraft supporting multiple CCMDs simultaneously out of JBER.

“Soon our aircraft and aircrews will be operating secretary-of-defense-directed missions out of JBER, or using it as a stopover point for high-priority missions to other destinations around the world.”

The Det is a strategic launch point for aircraft such as the RC-135V/W Rivet Joint (RJ), and will provide additional support for the intelligence demands of the 135-series aircraft community.

“The geographic and strategic location of this detachment cannot be overstated,” said Rachel. “This detachment will have RC-135V/W Rivet Joint, RC-135S Cobra Ball, RC-135U Combat Sent, and WC-135R Constant Phoenix, and others to provide world-wide operations, intelligence, maintenance, logistics and administrative support to the **55th Wing**'s reconnaissance operations.”



## FORMER 55<sup>TH</sup> WING COMMANDER NOMINATED FOR ONE STAR

**Colomel Kristen D. Thompson**, who commanded the **55th Wing** from 22 June 2021 to 22 June 2023, has been nominated by the President for promotion to the rank of brigadier general in a 12 April 2024 announcement.

She was an ardent supporter of the **Association** while serving at Offutt and maintains her membership.

She is currently serving as a Military Fellow on the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City, NY.

Colonel Thompson continues the long line of former leaders of the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth* who have risen in the ranks. *Hoo-rah!!*





## BOARD OF DIRECTORS DIRECTORY

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Other Members of the Board of Directors:

**Jim Maloney, Val Dugie, Bill McKechnie, Bo Marlin, Phil Acquaro, Joe Siniscalchi.** *Active Duty/Government Representatives: Jeff Johnson and Mike Hoskins.*

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## FORMER BOARD MEMBER PROMOTED TO BG

**Colonel David A. Priesman** was promoted to brigadier general with a swearing in ceremony on 27 October 2023 in Quarters 13 on Offutt AFB. He is now serving as Mobilization Assistant to the Director of Global Operations.

The presiding official was **Major General John Nichols**, USSTRATCOM J3, at left in photo following.



Then-Lt Col Priesman began serving on the **55<sup>th</sup> Wing Association** Board of Directors as an active duty representative in August of 2016.

He remained in that status until June of 2022 when he went PCA to a STRATCOM position, after nearly six years. That has to be a record. The usual tenure for active duty reps is two years or less.

DP did not just hold the position. He made meaningful contributions, and provided invaluable and insightful prospective from the active duty community.

Priesman recently commented, “For whatever this is worth, knowing what I was giving up with you guys was one of the hardest decisions I’ve ever had to make.”

He has retained his longstanding membership in the **Association**.

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## TREASURER’S REPORT



As of 20 April 2024, the treasury had an account balance (rounded) of \$26,000.

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. One optimistic member is paid thru 2048!!

Although the **Association** is solvent, we have expenses, obligations, and bills to pay, such as the Birthday Ball, publishing this newsletter, reunion seed money, and projects and donations as they are deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors.

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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.....or due to your generous nature.

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.

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# MEMBERSHIP REPORT

There were 386 members in good standing on 20 April 2024. Compare to 402 last December. Members and dues do expire, unfortunately. **If your dues expired in 2023, you got this issue as a courtesy. Please rejoin.**

**Holding steady here, but more members need to renew their memberships and the Association needs to add new ones to remain viable**

130 widows receive the newsletter gratis. As always, they are welcome to any and all Association functions.

Forty-nine **55<sup>th</sup> 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 27**, an all time high.

Nebraska has the most members at 73; Virginia is next with 33, Texas 30 and Florida with 20.

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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 expiration year 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](mailto: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. NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO RENEW.**

**Life Members and widows are dues exempt.**

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When using the traditional US Postal Service to send in your dues, 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://55<sup>th</sup> wingassociation.square.site](https://55th-wingassociation.square.site)*

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

**Sending Mo the 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 on the Association web site, 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.  
Bug Mo if you think there is an error.*

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The 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Association donates \$550 to the 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Birthday Ball fund, 22 April 2024.

Colonel Mark Howard, 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Commander, accepts the check from presenters:

L-R: Vice President Mo Krishna, Mike Hoskins, Wing representative to the Association Board of Directors, as is Jeff Johnson.

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## COLD WAR MEMORIAL



Your 55<sup>th</sup> Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Cold War Monument remains in the care of Association member **Perry Peloquin** and his crew, year round as seasonable weather allows.

*(Photo from the right front corner, showing brick patio and benches. July 2023.)*

As always, the memorial serves up great memories and tributes and stories as alums check out the names on the pavers that make up the patio of the Memorial. Those names always strike up "Blast from the Past" recollections, smiles, and gratitude for having served with such fine Americans"

**Perry Peloquin**, (E-mail 3 December 2023)

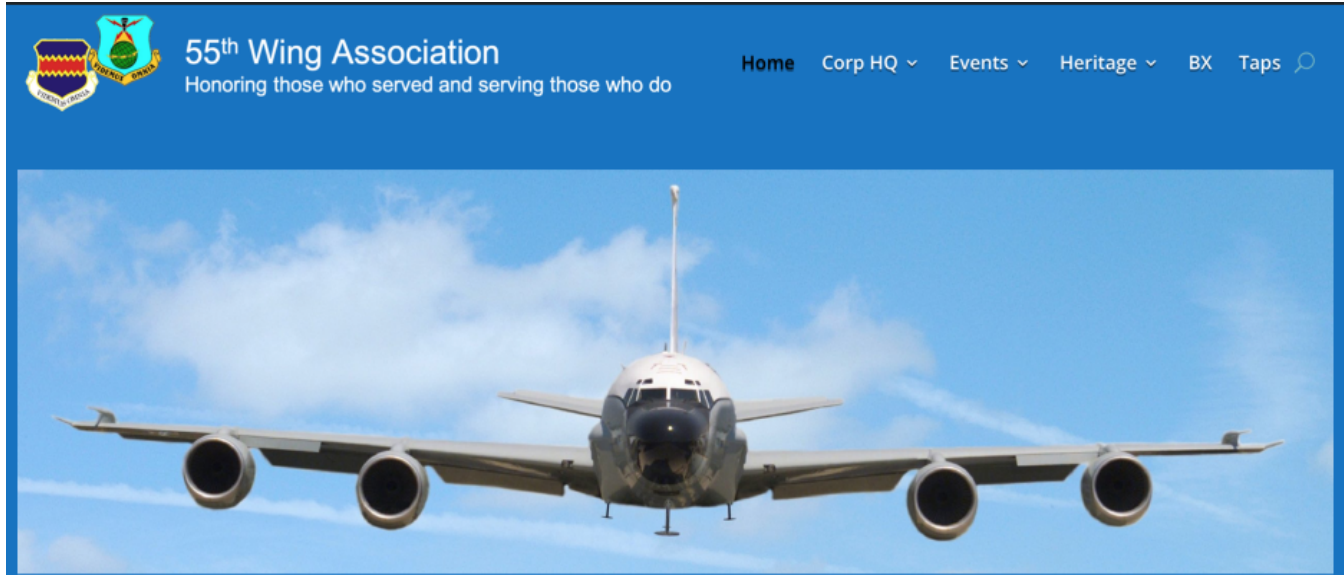
# 55<sup>TH</sup> WING ASSOCIATION WEB SITE 3.0

## 55WA.org

Members of the *Fighting' Fifty-Fifth* see a lot (in fact, *We See All!*) on the front lines in our challenging world. Share your stories with our members and for posterity! Send them to the Webmaster by clicking the 'support@55wa.org' button on our home page, <https://55wa.org>.

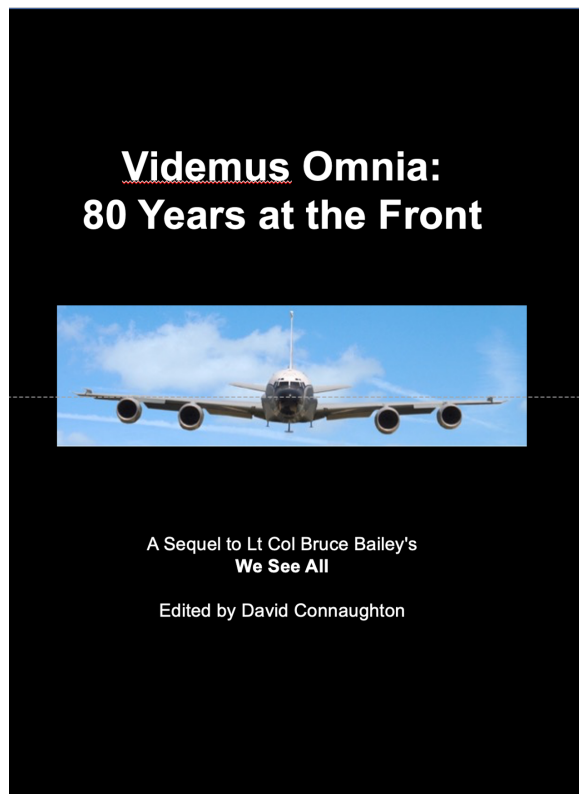
*Semper Videmus Omnia!*

*Dave Connaughton, The Web Guy*



*Web site front page by Dave*

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*Now Available on Amazon*

The story of the Fightin' Fifty-Fifth from its 1941 inception to 2021, featuring

- The commanders
- The notable characters
- The key events
- The locations
- The aircraft we flew
- The MiGs we met
- And 106 first-hand harrowing and humorous accounts

This meticulously researched book will remind those who were there of what it was like, and explain to those who weren't why the 55<sup>th</sup> holds such pride in our past and hope for our future.

Hardcover 503 pages, \$24.00.

[https://www.amazon.com/Videmus-Omnia-80-Years-Front/dp/BOC5KNGNW6/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?crid=3QKCFHIY91BV1&keywords=videmus+omnia&qid=1689077759&srefix=videmus+omnia%2Caps%2C128&sr=8-2](https://www.amazon.com/Videmus-Omnia-80-Years-Front/dp/BOC5KNGNW6/ref=sr_1_2?crid=3QKCFHIY91BV1&keywords=videmus+omnia&qid=1689077759&srefix=videmus+omnia%2Caps%2C128&sr=8-2)

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## LETTERS ‘N STUFF

Hi Max:

I'd like to thank you for all the work you do on the *Videmus Omnia* newsletter.

I know it is a lot of work, but what you are doing helps make our **Association** more cohesive and better in every way.

*Al Feldkamp*, Monument, CO. (E-mail 19 December 2023)

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Max.

Got the newsletter (December 2023 issue) yesterday.

Was eager to see the reunion info. Looks as though all had a great time. Wanted to be there but health problems intervened.

Seems like more and more the attendees either were in the **Wing** before me, or more common, after me.

Looking forward to making the 2025 reunion.

I just renewed my membership for another three years.

Would appreciate it if/when referring to non-**55th** units that the 24th SRS at Eielson AFB, AK, be mentioned, as for many of us it was our introduction to Recce. It was also the one time home to future commanders of the **55th**.

One more quick item, I noticed that there doesn't seem to be anybody assigned as a POC if you live west of the Rockies, as in the Northwest. There has to be some of us out this way. (There are four.)

Was very, very sorry to see **Golda Eldrige** in the TAPS section. Golda was a great guy, calm, confident, and personable. Crossed paths many times including at CTAS after retirement.

Happy Landings. Wish all of you a great 2024 and beyond, blue skies, and an ever present tailwind

*Mark W. Smith*, Chinook, WA. (From an e-mail 27 December 2023)

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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 [rynohansen@hotmail.com](mailto:rynohansen@hotmail.com), preferably; or mail to the address on the Directory page 7.*

*We encourage and welcome any and all 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.*

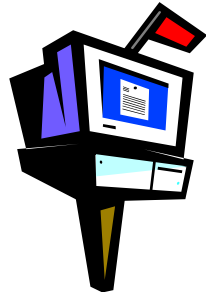
*The only way to broaden our coverage is to get input from throughout Fifty-Fifth-land.*

*Letters, articles, photos, and other items in this issue are examples.*

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*(Contributions may be, .....well, of course they will be, edited for content, readability, and spacing.)*

*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 the editor's biggest concern.*



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## EC-135C RESTORATION EC-135 #049

After six years and over 34,000 volunteer hours, the interior and exterior restoration of the 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.

Veteran SAC warriors can visit and remember how ‘we’ won the Cold War. *Hoo-rah!!*

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](https://SACMuseum.org/donate).

**Please specify that the donation is for the EC-135C project, and if you care to, in memory of Steve Stevens.**

Maintenance and upkeep is never ending.

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## T A P S



**BARBOUR, Francis D.**, 87, 8 February 2024, South Haven, MI; married to **Diane** for over 68 years. A career intelligence enlisted troop, Frank served with NATO, in Vietnam and with the 544<sup>th</sup> Intel Wing at Offutt AFB, NE. Retiring as a MSgt, he got his BA in Business Admin from Bellevue University and served many years a deacon in the Saint Benedict the Moor Church in Omaha.

**BRTEK, George J.**, 91, 28 January 2024, Bellevue, NE; survived by wife **Beth** of 68 years. Chief Brtek was a boomer by trade in the 2ACCS at Offutt for many years, 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1970s he was the chief scheduler for Ground Training of aircrews in the 55<sup>th</sup>.

**BRUESS, Leslie, L.**, 86, 14 August 2023. Spokane, WA; wife, **Mary**. Les served in the 55<sup>th</sup> SRW from 1957 to 1969, as a navigator in KC-97s at Forbes AFB, KS, then in KC-135s at Offutt. He went to Eielson AFB, AK, in RCs, then returned to Offutt. Les was on staff of the 3902<sup>nd</sup> Air Base Wing at Offutt, then had tours with PACAF in Thailand and Japan before retiring.

**COHEN, Rebecca L.**, 70, 31 December 2023, Bellevue, NE; wife of **Howard**, a former RC-135 EWO in the **55<sup>th</sup>** at Offutt. Becky grew up in San Diego. She was a vocational nurse (RN) who studied at Creighton University in Omaha, then accepted a commission in the Air Force. After her active duty service, she worked in CCU and ICU at several Omaha area hospitals. Becky's final career was as a nursing instructor at Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs, IA.

**CRAFT, Roby R.**, 94, 23 January 2024, New Smyrna Beach, FL. A graduate of the University of Virginia, he was an Air Force pilot during a 20 year career. He served at Forbes in the **55<sup>th</sup> SRW** flying RB-47s in the 1960s. Although he had other assignments, Roby always said his time in the **55<sup>th</sup>** were his best years, and he often attended reunions.

**EISENBERG, Louis**, 89, 7 February 2024, of Governor Island, NY, died in Wilmington, DE; wife **Marcia**. During a 29 year Air Force career, he served in the **55<sup>th</sup> SRW** at Forbes AFB, KS, as an RB-47 pilot circa 1959, 1960s.

**GOODLETT, Billie Dale**, 79, 23 February 2024, Papillion, NE; wife of **55** years, **Carole**. Billie was a steward who served on Air Force One for three presidents. He later came to the 2ACCS at Offutt in the 1970s and retired from Command Support Airlift as a SMSgt. He then worked for the USPS for several years.

**JOHNSON, Leo**, 87, 6 January 2024, Fairfax, OK; wife of 60 years, **Julianne (Judy)**. Leo attended the USAF Academy and was cited in Who's Who as the first Native American to graduate there. *Altho Leo claimed a friend of his was in the class ahead of him and deserved the recognition.* After graduating in 1962, he completed pilot training and was assigned to the **55<sup>th</sup> SRW** at Forbes as an RB-47 copilot. Leo then went to Kadena in RC-135s with the 82<sup>nd</sup> SRS. He had a tour at the Pentagon then retired to his home town and taught and coached at the local high school. Eventually, he was vice principal in a Tulsa alternative school.

**KESSELL, Susan L.**, 75, 9 December 2023, Bellevue, NE; wife of **Roy** for 51 years. He was a 2ACCS pilot at Offutt from 1977. Susan, a Denver native, graduated from Colorado State with a degree in elementary education. She taught in Colorado, Texas, and then in Bellevue for over 29 years.

**MARKOVICK, Ofelia**, 85, 14 December 2023, Bellevue, NE; wife of **Joe** for nearly 52 years. Ofelia was an ESL teacher in Omaha Public Schools for 14 years. Joe served in the **55<sup>th</sup>** as a RC navigator from 1974 thru 1981. Then on staff in the recon ops division as a briefer and planner.

**MOLLNOW, Marvin**, 94, 13 January 2024, Green Cove Springs, FL; survived by his wife of 35 years, **Cindi**. Marv graduated from Florida State in 1954. Commissioned through ROTC, he went through navigator training at Ellington AFB, TX. He was first assigned as a navigator in the 343<sup>rd</sup> SRS in RB-47s at Forbes through the 1960s. He then went into RC-135s with the 82<sup>nd</sup> at Kadena and later at Offutt back in the **55<sup>th</sup>**. He retired in 1974 and began a second 20 year career as a teacher and coach at Orange Park High School (FL). He began long distance running and after the age of 56 ran in 27 marathons including five in Boston.

**MUMAUGH, Daniel J.**, 71, 16 August 2023, Springdale, AR; married to **Cheryl** for 49 years. Dan graduated from University of Nebraska-Omaha in 1974. After pilot raining, tours in tankers and the Pentagon, he was assigned to the **55<sup>th</sup> SRW** as an "RC-135 aircraft commander, circa 1980, then went to SAC HQ staff. After a varied and successful career, including the first cadre of B-1 crew members at McConnell AFB, KS. he retired in 2000 after 26 years service.

**MURPHY, Terry D.** 85, 26 February 2024, New Bern, SC; he was married to **Kathy** for 40 years. Terry graduated from the University of Illinois, entered the Air Force and pilot training. He was a tanker pilot, had a Vietnam tour flying C-7s, later coming to the **55<sup>th</sup>** flying RC-135s in the early 1970s. Terry later served as the Deputy CC for Operations in the **Wing** circa 1981. He became the 22<sup>nd</sup> SAC Wing commander at March AFB, CA, in 1983. His last assignment was at RAF Mildenhall, UK, as SILK PURSE Chief. In retirement in New Bern, he immersed himself in several community organizations,

**ROGERS, Robert J. (Bob)**, 87, 23 August 2023, Sudbury, MA. Survived by wife of 62 years, **Carol**. Bob was a navigator with the **55<sup>th</sup> SRW** at Forbes AFB, KS, thru the 1960s. He was the nav on **Hobart Mattison's** RB-47 crew that was shot up by North Koreans and survived in April 1965. Bob later went to the 82<sup>nd</sup> SRS at Kadena in RC-135s, and had a SE Asia tour in AC-130 Spectre gunships.

**SAVAGE, Wilma Ann**, 90, 12 March 2024, Green Mountain, NC. Ann was married to **Walt** for 68 years. He was an RB-47 pilot in the 343<sup>rd</sup> at Forbes who survived a crash at Incirlik AB, Turkey in April 1965. Ann was an Atlanta native who graduated from Baylor University in 1955 where she met Walt. A dedicated military spouse who supported her husband's career, Ann was also the matriarch of her family.

**STEVENS, Merlin F. "Steve" Stevens**, 86, 8 March 2024, Pacific Junction, IA, but a long time resident of Bellevue, NE. Steve was commissioned and became a pilot through the aviation cadet program. He had multiple tours with the **55<sup>th</sup> SRW**, most notable as the wing commander. *See tribute following.*

At his cemetery ceremony on 19 March, the **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** performed an RC-135 flyover with two passes. An honor few receive.

**WILLIAMSON, Mark L.**, 53, 26 March 2024, Papillion, NE; married for 27 years to **Michelle**, also an Air Force veteran. An Air Force BRAT, "Nukes" was born in Great Falls, MT. An RC-135 pilot in the **55<sup>th</sup>** at Offutt in the late 1990s. After a variety of assignments, he returned to the **Wing** in 2014 at the vice commander. He left in 2016 for NAOC staff, retired, then worked as a contractor at USSTRATCOM at Offutt.

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**Colonel Merlin F. (Steve) Stevens**, USAF-Retired, an Iowa native, 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, "Looking Glass".

In April 1974 Colonel Stevens was **specifically** selected to be the command crew aircraft commander 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**). While there, 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** of the **Wing** from November 1982 through October 1984. He retired in April 1986 after one more Pentagon tour, culminating an outstanding 30-year career serving his country.

Colonel Stevens was 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.

After his retirement from the Air Force, Steve worked as a Program Manager for Harris Corp. in Bellevue for many years. He also devoted many days and hours at the SAC Museum helping to restore the EC-135.

Steve was inducted into the **55<sup>th</sup> Wing** Hall of Fame in 2006.

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*. In addition to his family, that is Colonel Stevens' most positive and lasting legacy.

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TAPS notification of **Association** members, spouses, friends and associates should be sent to Editor Ryan Hansen, 908 March Drive, Bellevue NE, 68005; or e-mail ryanhansen@hotmail.com.

*It is **not** an imperative that the departed be a member of the **Association**. If one has any relevant connection to **55th** history, they will be remembered.*

Please include next of kin and an address to whom an **Association** condolence message may be sent by the President.

**The date of demise, age, location; and if known, connection to the 55<sup>th</sup> - base, time frame and Air Force specialty (i.e.: crewmember, maintenance, communications) will be helpful.**

*Please note that the news in TAPS is determined and limited by how much and how accurate the given source information. Sometimes it is too little and others are very lengthy.*

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## TAPS ON THE ASSN WEB SITE

The TAPS section has a listing for access to the names and dates of those in the 55<sup>th</sup> family who have passed beginning in 1996. There is a search box to look up those on the list.

Anyone who wishes to have the name of a family member, friend, or comrade who was a former member of the *Fighting' Fifty-Fifth* added to the listing can request the webmaster to do so.

Please have the date of demise (*at least the year*) for placement in chronology.

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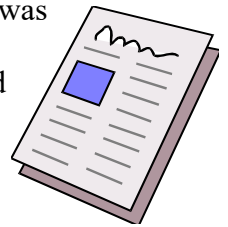
## EVOLUTION OF A NEWSLETTER

Seasoned members of the **Association**, who date back to the original organization formed as the 55<sup>th</sup> **ELINT Association** in the 1960s, may remember the early form of newsletters as a one sheet (front and back) to maybe four pages, in the mimeograph style. That media basically was to inform the members about upcoming, or just passed, reunions that the **Association** held roughly every eighteen months.

For **Association** founder **Bob Dibbell**, that was pretty much all that was needed since there was no formal governing body, nor other business conducted. Bob and his successor as sole officer, **Bruce Bailey**, gradually added new informational features of general interest, such as 'war stories' and an improved TAPS section.

Over time, there were interim 'caretakers', and some upgrades in graphics, paper, pictures, and content as the years went by, but the newsletter basically stayed pretty much a fundamental pamphlet which was issued on an 'as needed' basis.

With the advent of the **Association's** formal corporate organization in 1995, a structured business-like forum, and a board of directors, it was evident for the need, and responsibility to convey to the membership how the organization was being run and what actions were taken that affected the entire group; particularly so as the **Association's** membership grew, and projects expanded and became more substantive.



### *The "Modern" Newsletter*

To that end, the newsletter you see today had its basic foundation laid by the concerted and efficient efforts of (the late) **Ben White** when he took over as secretary in 1997. He is the 'father' of the 'modern' **Association** newsletter.

Ben made himself computer literate, created the letterhead, began using more graphics and wider implementation of pictures, expanded content, and used a standardized format. His first issue: April 1997.

The name **Videmus Omnia** became official with the February 1999 issue. The **dual shield logo** was added first time in January 2000.

There was a collaborative team effort from November 1997 as yours truly assisted with proofreading, editing, additional materials, etc.

Ben retired from the Board of Directors and as newsletter editor, and I inherited the job and went solo with the January 2001 newsletter. (*Wow! Tempus fugit.*)

Upgrades and modifications continued as technology and techniques improved, and were learned by this techno-babe in the cyber-woods who waded through it all; sometimes with blood, sweat, tears, massive hair pulling, churning stomach, sleep loss, and primal screams, before getting to the relatively routine effort it has become. (*It was a steep learning curve for a time, boys and girls.*)

### **Logistics**

It may seem that the **Videmus Omnia** just magically shows up in your snail-mailbox periodically, but you may be interested in the logistics of the modern-era process.

Ben began doing the grunt work from his home in North Carolina, then electronically sent it to the Heartland of Nebraska for whatever work was needed. The finished product would then go to **Errol Hoberman** in the Florida panhandle.

From there, he saw that it got printed and mailed. Errol, as the membership guy then, had the mailing roster and worked diligently in concert with a local printer all those years, gradually upgrading the quality of paper and mailing methods.

Errol also instituted sending the newsletter via e-mail to 300+ members, which saved on paper, printing and postage costs.

That method turned out to be frustrating, as many e-addresses would be rejected for myriad reasons, mostly because the **Association** was not apprised when members changed servers, e-names, etc.

The issues have been posted on the **Association** web site since its inception in 1996.

### **Change Over**

In May 2008 **Michael Cook** took over the dual jobs of Treasurer and Membership Chair and the newsletter operation moved to Bellevue. It was a seamless transition and more efficient by having it all in one location.

We went through several printers before settling with Digital Express of Omaha the past several years, and that firm has been a solid partner.

Over the years the newsletters have always focused on the **Association** activities and business, but more articles about the **Wing** and its many and varied missions became an integral part of the information going to the membership.

**Mo Krishna** became the Membership Chair in April 2020 maintaining the data base/ mailing list established by his predecessors.

Just the coordinated team effort you would expect from the can-do spirit of the **Fighting' Fifty-Fifth!**

(*Trust me on this one, it hasn't always gone as smoothly as this narrative reads, but we "git-er-dun". Mostly, it is a labor of love. Yeah-but, sometimes it is just labor.*)

So, there you have it. It was my thought that you, as members, would appreciate just how this all came about and how it works. (*Maybe not. It could just be me.*)

One of the worst things that can happen to organizational periodicals is that they become dull, predictable and/or uninteresting. So, if anyone out there has ideas or suggestions on how to improve the issues (*Yeah, yeah, color would be great, but we can't afford it in the printed versions, costs would double*), do **not** hesitate to inform the editor or any member of the Board. Some changes and additions in recent years have come about just that way. This is YOUR newsletter.

As a final note, it has always been the goal to keep the membership informed, interested and entertained. We hope you look forward to receiving the newsletters, and that they meet the intended purpose and your expectations.

**Videmus Omnia, Max.**

*Created in November 2007; originally published in the February 2008 newsletter. Updated for this issue.*

*Another Transition Milestone*

This issue of *Videmus Omnia* marks the end of my tenure as editor, 23+ years and 58 issues. Time to pass the ol' keyboard to the next generation.

**Ryan Hansen** is a younger professional. He was the Director of the **55th Wing** Public Affairs for many years. In that capacity he worked with and supported the **Association** in numerous ways with the president and this editor.

He will bring a new, fresh prospective to the newsletter process.

One regret: I always hoped to publish THE perfect issue: no misinformation, bad grammar, misspellings, etc. But no matter how many proof readings, spell checking were accomplished, at least one sneaky typo or such would get through. Dammit.

I want to express my gratitude to **everyone** who contributed articles and photos to the newsletter process over lo, these many years. They helped make it a finished product.

Specifically, President Joe Spivey who has been a relentless driver during his tenure when I needed a boost, or was floundering for material, which happened too often in recent years.

I also appreciate very much those of you who sent the numerous letters and e-mails of compliments and support. They helped make the effort worthwhile.

I'll be around to assist in the transition, if asked or needed, and may contribute articles or items from time to time, but for now, I sign out with the journalism farewell.....#30.

*Videmus Omnia Forever, Max*



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## ASSOCIATION BX

Management by **Dennis Haun**.

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 web site BX section.**

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

Long Sleeve **55<sup>th</sup> Association** ¼ Zip Pullovers

White, Royal Blue, Red, Navy, Grey (S-XXXL). Cost \$43 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$49.50).

Short Sleeve **55<sup>th</sup> Association** Polos

White, Red, Royal Blue, Dark Navy. (S-XXXL). Cost \$40 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$46.50).

Long Sleeve **55<sup>th</sup> 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*

**55<sup>th</sup> Wing Association** Hats

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

**55<sup>th</sup> Wing Association** Hot/Cold Tumblers Blue.  
Cost \$30 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$36.50) *(All 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: **55<sup>th</sup> Wing Association.**  
**NOTE: Procedures are now in place to order off the BX section of the 55<sup>th</sup> Wing Association web site!!**

Questions/Comments please contact Denny Haun at [papahaun@cox.net](mailto:papahaun@cox.net).

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## 55<sup>TH</sup> FASHION PINS

The pins are sold to **Association** members all over the country. They are particularly evident at **55<sup>th</sup>** 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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## SPRING HAS SPRUNG

## TAXES ARE TAXING



Over Offutt AFB Cemetery  
*Photo by Moore*



