

Videmus Omnia

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 55TH WING ASSOCIATION



APRIL 2025



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Newsletter Inputs Encouraged!
The V.O. tends to be Offutt-centric, but please help us diversify coverage by sending articles, letters and photos to the editor at:
908 Martin Drive
Bellevue, NE 68005

NEWS & NOTES

SHOPPING

Please visit the association website to see all items!



Long Sleeve 55th Association Shirt
Red, White, Navy Blue. (S-XXXL). Cost \$63
+ \$6.50 Shipping (\$69.50).

Short Sleeve 55th Association Polos
White, Red, Royal Blue, Dark Navy. (S-XXXL).
Cost \$40 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$46.50).

Long Sleeve 55th Association 1/4 Zip Pullovers
White, Royal Blue, Red, Navy, Grey (S-XXXL).
Cost \$43 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$49.50).

In addition, there are also hats and tumblers available.

Questions? Please contact Denny Haun at papahaun@cox.net
Denny Haun, 918 Oxford Circle Papillion, NE, 68046
Please make checks for the full amount of purchase to: 55th Wing Association.



Videmus Omnia



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

(Contact Information Update)

Name _____ Spouse _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____
email: _____

Are you a Veteran? Yes No Branch of Service _____
(Dates of Service) _____

Are you a former member of the 55th Strat Recon Wing? _____
When were you a member of the 55th Strat Recon Wing? _____
(Dates of Service) _____

Are you a current or former member of the 55th Wing? _____
When were you a member of the 55th Wing? _____
(Dates of Service) _____

Which 55th Unit(s) were you a member? _____

Are you on active duty? If so, with what unit? _____ Rank _____

What is your present occupation? _____

Return this form with dues, if applicable. \$20 per year or \$55 for three years to:
55th Wing Association, P.O. Box 13165, Offutt AFB, Neb. 68113

NEWS & NOTES



TAPS

BOWKER, William R., 100 – Died Jan. 30, 2025, in Milwaukie, Oregon. He was married to his late wife, **Jean**, for 74 years. Commissioned in 1944, he became a pilot and later served in the Air Force Reserve. Recalled for service during the Korean War in 1954, he spent two years in Japan training Air Force pilots. In 1957, he was assigned to the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Forbes Air Force Base, Kansas, as an RB-47 aircraft commander. After retiring to Oregon in 1967, he worked as a corporate pilot. He and Jean enjoyed traveling the country in their Airstream.

BRYAN, Kenneth, 92 – Died Aug. 29, 2024, in Dallas. He was married to **Gretchen** for 64 years. A San Francisco native, he graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1957. He commissioned into the Air Force, became a pilot, and flew RB-47s with the 55th at Forbes in the early 1960s. After leaving the service, he had a long career with American Airlines. He remained connected with his Air Force friends through the Association and attended occasional reunions.

CHAFFEE, Willard S., 92 – Died Feb. 19, 2025, in Bellevue, Nebraska. Married to **Bert** for 67 years, he was a career airborne reconnaissance systems operator (“boomer”) who served in the 2nd Airborne Command and Control Squadron at Offutt and the Command Support Airlift division in the 1970s. He retired as a senior master sergeant. He was active in his church and local veterans’ organizations.

CURZON, Hanna D., 91 – Died Jan. 10, 2025, in Harriman, Utah. The former wife of **Danny**, a pilot who flew RB-47s at Forbes and RC-135s at Kadena Air Base, Japan, she grew up in Washington, D.C., and spent much of her life working in the White House, Pentagon, and House of Representatives as a secretary to Nebraska congressmen and senior government officials. A free spirit devoted to her extended family, she loved socializing and traveling.

HEDGE, Joanne, 87 – Died Dec. 24, 2024, in Seminole, Oklahoma. She was the widow of **Richard “Dick” Hedge**, an RC-135 pilot with the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, who later served as vice commander and commander of the wing at RAF Mildenhall, U.K. Both graduates of Indiana University, she was known as a gracious and devoted Air Force wife, a talented chef, and a warm hostess.

HOFER, Joy, 84 – Died March 24, 2025, in Henderson, Nevada. She was the widow of **Wesley**, an electronic warfare officer who served in RB-47s at Forbes in the late 1960s, then in RC-135s at Kadena Air Base, Japan, and Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, before retiring from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. He passed in 2007. Joy was an active member of Officers’ Wives Clubs, loved bridge, and was known for her fun-loving nature and warmth.

OLIVO, John Xavier, 79 — Died April 2, 2025, in San Antonio, Texas. Survived by his wife, **Christina**. A native Texan, Olivo served as an RC-135 navigator and later as operations officer of the 38th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron. He went on to command the 55th Field Maintenance Squadron and the 55th Operational Maintenance Squadron during the 1980s and early 1990s.

SMITH, Garrison, 76 – Died March 17, 2025, in Mesa, Arizona. He was married to **Patty** for nearly 50 years. An RC-135 pilot in the 55th at Offutt in the mid-1970s, he also served in the Strategic Air Command Reconnaissance Center and the 89th Airlift Wing at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. After his Air Force career, he flew for Southwest Airlines.

THOMPSON, Nancy, 84 – Died Feb. 16, 2025, in Omaha, Nebraska. She was the widow of **James**, an RC-135 electronic warfare officer in the 343rd at Offutt in the 1970s who later served on the Strategic Air Command Inspector General team. A devoted stay-at-home mother, she also held part-time jobs when family life allowed. She was active in her church and in organizations supporting special needs children.

FROM *the* PRESIDENT



Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth Faithful, Friends, Family & Followers,

The “SPY V” flight has landed. After eight years on the VIDEMUS OMNIA flight path, my annual sorties in the Association cockpit have ended. Like the SAC alert days of old, it’s time for a hot-seat crew swap—engines running and ready for takeoff.

2025 has been a rush. Since Veterans Day, we’ve executed another successful joint Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth/55th Wing Association Holiday Open House, held Jan. 8 in our ever-expanding museum. It drew our largest crowd yet—thanks to all who made it happen.

To mark the Wing’s 85th birthday, planning began early for the 2025 Birthday Ball and Recon Rendezvous. Heritage Week events—including “Tales,” Hall of Fame induction, and Palm Trophy presentation—were executed smoothly. Special thanks to Mike “Coach” Hoskins for a strong kick-off at the Beardmore Event Center. Rendezvous highlights included tours of Offutt’s DPAA and STRATCOM, lunch at the Warhawk Café, and a Rivet Joint static display (shoutout to Lt. Col. “Worm” Armstrong). We also visited flood recovery sites, the new wing HQ (salute to “Mo!”), and received a mission brief at the Urschler Theater (thanks to Lt. Col. Joe “Moose” Maruska). A classic Midwestern fish fry, hosted by Denny Haun, Al Brunner, and the St. Matt’s team, closed out the event.

For the first time, our historian Jess Chavez and videographer Chad Watkins captured interviews with out-of-town veteran alums for historical preservation. If you’re local, expect a chance to share your story soon.

The 85th Birthday Ball was a true celebration. A crisp salute to the planning committee, donors, sponsors, protocol and PA teams, DJ Marvie Smooth (Tech. Sgt. Steve Marvin), the Heartland of America Band dinner ensemble, color guard, photographer, and every attendee. We were honored to receive 85th birthday proclamations from Congress (thanks to Rep. Don “Bits” Bacon’s staff), the Nebraska governor, and the Unicameral (thank you, Bob Andersen). And yes—highlight of the night? Watching Brig. Gen. Reg Urschler absolutely own the dance floor.

Thank you for your friendship, loyalty, and trust during my tenure. I’ll remain on the board, and I encourage all to honor our “TAPS” members who’ve taken their final flight. The hot-seat swap is complete. I’m proud to pass the yoke to Mo Krishna, who I know will lead with honor—honoring those who served and serving those who do.

Mo, you are CLEARED TO TAXI.

Videmus Omnia!

Spy V

Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth Faithful, Friends, Family & Followers,

First, a heartfelt thank-you to past President Joe Spivey for his eight years of leadership and more than 20 years of service as a member and board member of this great organization. His fingerprints are all over who we are and how we support our membership. We’re especially grateful that Joe isn’t retiring to his porch swing just yet and has agreed to continue serving as secretary. His presence will help make this transition nearly seamless.

Thank you to the membership for electing the new Board of Directors, and thank you to the board for your confidence in electing me as president. We have important work ahead to ensure our flight path remains steady and we hit every waypoint.

I won’t repeat all the thank-yous Joe shared for the outstanding Reunion and Birthday Ball, but we’re already capturing lessons learned and preparing for next year’s Birthday Ball—this time in a supporting role to the 55th Wing lead. Planning also begins soon for our next Rendezvous in 2027.

The board is moving forward on several initiatives in the coming months, including transitioning our incorporation to Nebraska, launching a new membership management and web service, and setting up our new treasurer and membership chairs for success. We’ll keep you informed and maintain open lines of communication. Joe set that precedent, and we will continue it. As we begin this new chapter, we hope to grow our membership to include younger generations while preserving our strong partnership with the 55th Wing. While the wing may undergo structural changes—such as transitioning to a flying wing and air base wing—our commitment to its heritage and success remains unwavering.

The sun never sets on the Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth, and it never sets on our pride and support for its current members serving in harm’s way.

Videmus Omnia!

Mo

**Please send TAPS notifications to Ryan Hansen at rynohansen@hotmail.com or 908 Martin Drive, Bellevue, NE, 68005.*

It is not an imperative that the departed be a member of the Association. If someone has a 55th connection, 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, connection to the 55th (base, time frame) and Air Force specialty would be appreciated.

2025 Annual Awards ceremony held

Event honors Warhawks who keep mission running

The 55th Wing held its annual awards ceremony on Feb. 8, 2025 at the Beardmore Event Center in Bellevue, Nebraska.

The event honors civilians and Airmen for exceptional performance and dedication to the mission.

“The men and women of the 55th Wing—both in uniform and our dedicated DoD civilians—are the rock stars who keep this mission running at full throttle,” said Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander. “Like an ‘80s hair band at the top of the charts, they bring energy, passion, and an unstoppable drive to everything they do.”

Airman of the Year
Senior Airman Journey Selby
55th Medical Group

NCO of the Year
Tech. Sgt. Michael Adkins
55th Operations Group

SNCO of the Year
Master Sgt. Jennie Shanker
55th Wing Staff Agency

Flight Commander of the Year
2nd Lt. Isabel Welch
55th Mission Support Group

CGO of the Year
2nd Lt. Caitlin Camara
55th Medical Group

FGO of the Year
Maj. Crista Farr
55th Operations Group

Volunteer of the Year
Ms. Elizabeth Dennis
55th Mission Support Group



The 55th Wing held its annual awards ceremony on Feb. 8, 2025 at the Beardmore Event Center in Bellevue, Nebraska.



Chief Master Sgt. Andrew Small, 55th Wing command chief, speaks to the audience at the annual awards ceremony.



Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander, hands the Olmstead-McKone trophy to Lt. Col. Andrew Ferguson, 55th Security Forces Squadron commander. The trophy recognizes the best unit in the 55th Wing.

Olmstead-McKone Trophy
55th Security Forces Squadron

Civilian of the Year (Category I)
Mr. Angelo Mercaldi
55th Mission Support Group

Civilian of the Year (Category II)
Mr. Laurence Holter
55th Operations Group

Civilian of the Year (Category III)
Mr. John Schraft
55th Wing Staff Agency

Honor Guard Member of the Year
Senior Airman Adam Martin
557th Weather Wing

Honor Guard Manager of the Year
Tech. Sgt. Gabriel Altman
55th Mission Support Group

First Sergeant of the Year
Senior Master Sgt. Matthew Womack
55th Maintenance Group

Innovator of the Year
Capt. Amelia Zweiner-Bray
55th Electronic Combat Group

Association hosts holiday open house

Annual events sees record attendance

The 55th Wing Association’s Holiday Open House took place at the 55th Wing headquarters on Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, Jan. 8, 2025.

The annual event was an opportunity to bring in the new year and provide everyone an opportunity to catch up.

Col. Aaron Gray, 55th Wing deputy commander, provided an update on the many organization changes happening at Offutt and within the 55th Wing.



Attendees at the 55th Wing Association’s Holiday Open House pose for a photo at the 55th Wing Museum on Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, Jan. 8, 2025.

Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth earns outstanding unit award



Air Combat Command recently announced the 55th Wing as a recipient of the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for its actions June 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023.

The OUA is awarded to units for exceptionally meritorious service, accomplishes specific acts of outstanding achievement, excels in combat operations against an armed enemy of the U.S., or conducts with distinct military operations involving conflict with, or exposure to, a hostile action by any opposing foreign force.

It is the first time since 2018 the wing has earned the distinction.

Wing announces summer squadron commander list

The following individuals were recently announced as incoming squadron commanders this summer for the 55th Wing.

In addition, the wing will welcome a new wing commander as well as three group commanders, which will be announced soon.

55th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
Lt. Col. (S) Rachel Weiler

55th Strategic Communications Squadron
Lt. Col. Kyle Pearce

55th Medical Support Squadron
Lt. Col. Andrew Bostic
75th Operational Support Squadron
Lt. Col. Jason Hechler

43d Electronic Combat Squadron
Lt. Col. Jesse Szweida

338th Combat Training Squadron
Lt. Col. Patrick Madden

390th Intelligence Squadron
Lt. Col. Sean Batson

45th Reconnaissance Squadron
Lt. Col. John Salvador
82d Reconnaissance Squadron
Lt. Col. Michael Ellsworth

95th Reconnaissance Squadron
Lt. Col. Stephen Warner

97th Intelligence Squadron
Lt. Col. Rosemary Perez-Howell

Boeing's B-47 Stratojet goes Cold War spying



A New Era of Bombers

Influenced by German World War II swept-wing designs, the Boeing XB-47 made its first flight on Dec. 17, 1947. With six jet engines mounted under its wings and a large internal bomb bay, the B-47 was built to carry nuclear weapons. The tandem-seat cockpit featured a bubble canopy, and a third crew member operated as a navigator and bombardier. The aircraft had a unique tandem landing gear system, with outrigger wheels in the engine nacelles.

The first production B-47A “Stratojet” flew on June 25, 1950, coinciding with the start of the Korean War. As jet fighters became more prevalent, the U.S. prioritized production of the B-47, which outperformed older piston-engine bombers.

Reconnaissance Role

Due to its range, speed and altitude, the B-47 was also modified for reconnaissance. The RB-47B, introduced in 1953, carried eight cameras but could only conduct daylight photography. It was soon replaced by the RB-47E, which had an extended nose, additional fuel tanks, and an array of cameras for intelligence gathering. It had a top speed of 572 mph, a ceiling of 47,800 feet, and inflight refueling capabilities.

The RB-47H, first delivered in 1955, was designed for electronic intelligence missions. It carried specialized equipment to intercept radar and communication signals during classified “ferret missions” near Soviet borders. Three additional crew members, known as “Crows” or “Ravens,” were housed in a pressurized compartment in the bomb bay to monitor enemy radar emissions. The aircraft retained twin 20 mm cannons and had jamming systems for defense.

In 1958, a structural refit called “Milk Bottle” strengthened wing mounts after multiple failures. This effort was conducted in secrecy by the Air Force and aircraft manufacturers.

Cold War Confrontations

On July 1, 1960, a Soviet MiG-19 shot down an RB-47H near Murmansk, claiming it had entered Soviet airspace. Two surviving crew members, Capt. Freeman Olmstead and Capt. John McKone, were captured and held in Moscow’s Lubyanka Prison until their release in 1961 after diplomatic negotiations. This incident came just two months after the U-2 spy plane incident with Francis Gary Powers.

Overflights of Soviet territory became common, with RB-47s conducting high-risk intelligence missions. In May 1954,

an RB-47E photographed Soviet airfields despite being attacked by 13 MiG-17s. In 1956 alone, U.S. forces conducted 156 RB-47 overflights of Siberia. Other encounters occurred in 1955, 1958, and 1965, including a North Korean MiG-17 attack over the Sea of Japan, where an RB-47 barely made it back to base after losing three engines.

Final Years

The last RB-47 variant, the RB-47K, was used for weather reconnaissance and nuclear fallout detection until 1963. The RB-47H was officially retired in 1967 and replaced by the Boeing RC-135. One was later reactivated for avionics testing in the 1970s and is now on display at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

The National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, houses an RB-47H that flew Soviet reconnaissance missions. Restored to its 1960 appearance, it serves as a testament to the Cold War reconnaissance efforts of the Strategic Air Command.

- *The Aviationist*

Border Mission Ramps Up – RJ flies around Baja Peninsula

An RC-135V/W Rivet Joint from the 55th Wing at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, conducted surveillance missions Feb. 3-4, 2025, off the coast of Mexico’s Baja Peninsula.

The U.S. Navy also deployed P-8 maritime patrol aircraft in the region around the same time.

These missions come amid an increase in U.S. military support for operations along the U.S.-Mexico border and discussions of potential direct action against drug cartels under President Donald Trump.

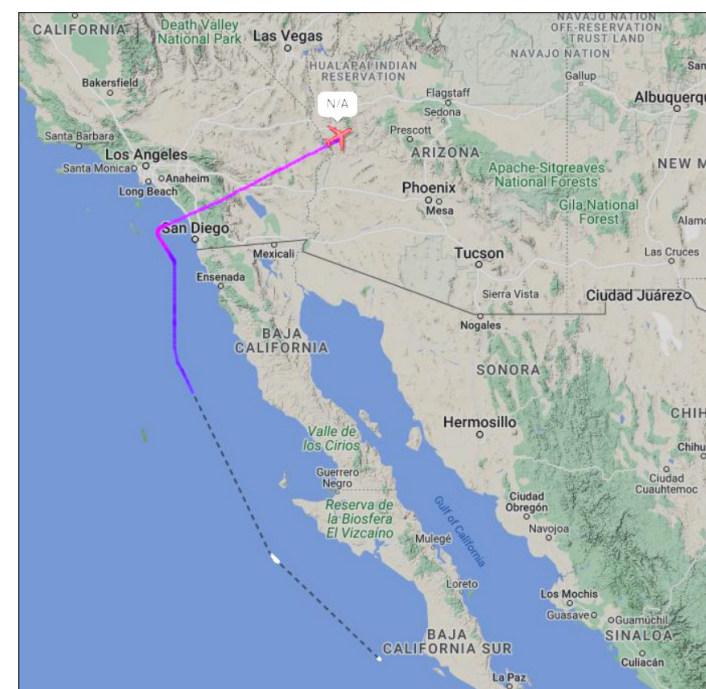
Flight Path and Operational Details

The RC-135V/W, tail number 64-14845, departed Offutt and flew southwest toward Southern California, then followed the Pacific coast of the Baja Peninsula before entering the Gulf of California. The aircraft later returned to Offutt via the same route.

Although the Gulf of California is relatively narrow, its center contains international waters and airspace. There are no indications that the Rivet Joint entered Mexican national airspace during these flights.

Broader Military Presence

While U.S. Northern Command did not comment on the specific flights, officials confirmed that 140 U.S. military intelligence personnel had been assigned to the command’s southern border mission. Additionally, 500 soldiers from the



Flight tracker data shows an RC-135V/W Rivet Joint flying back to Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., after flying off the coast around Mexico’s Baja Peninsula Feb. 4, 2025.

10th Mountain Division are deployed as part of broader border security efforts. Overall, more than 2,000 additional U.S. troops have been ordered to support the Pentagon’s border operations.

Topping out ceremony marks NKO Campus milestone

The 55th Wing, Air Force Civil Engineer Center and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, celebrated the topping-out of the Non-Kinetic Operations Campus Jan. 28, 2025, at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

This milestone marks the completion of vertical construction of the \$389 million project.

The three-story, 420,000-square-foot facility will support critical mission functions, including intelligence, training, maintenance, and reconnaissance.

It represents the final phase of a seven-building reconstruction effort initiated after the devastating 2019 floods.



A topping out ceremony for the Non-Kinetic Operations Campus took place Jan. 28, 2025, at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

First EC-130H Compass Call – Historic aircraft on display in front of ECG

Developed under the direction of Gen. Wilber Creech in 1978, the EC-130H Compass Call played a pivotal role in advancing the U.S. Air Force’s electromagnetic combat capabilities.

The first EC-130H, tail number 73-01587, was delivered by BIG SAFARI on March 19, 1982. As the Air Force’s first modified airborne communications jammer, the aircraft revolutionized modern combat operations.

An Historic Aircraft

Originally dubbed “Kermit” and later renamed “Reaper,” aircraft 73-01587 logged more than 29,000 flight hours, including over 11,000 hours in direct support of combat operations worldwide. Its final flight took place on Jan. 15, 2020. After retirement, the aircraft remained on the ramp at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, for more than two years while awaiting its final destination.

On June 22, 2024, after overcoming logistical challenges, the aircraft was relocated to its permanent display at the entrance to the 55th Electronic Combat Group campus. The move was a coordinated effort between the 55th ECG’s 755th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron.

Now standing as a symbol of innovation and dedication, the aircraft honors the contributions of those involved in its development, maintenance, and operation. Before being sealed, current and former 55th ECG members signed the aircraft, leaving their mark on a piece of history. The EC-130H will serve as a sentinel to future jammers, honoring the service and sacrifices of those who helped shape its legacy.

A New Era Begins

Just two months after the retirement of 73-01587, the Air Force ushered in a new era of electromagnetic warfare with the arrival of the EA-37B Compass



EC-103H Compass Call tail number 73-01587, the first delivered by BIG SAFARI, is now on display in front of the 55th Electronic Group headquarters on Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.



(Clockwise from top left) EC-103H Compass Call tail number 73-01587, sits on the ramp following its final flight Jan 20, 2020. 55th ECG Jammers officially retired the aircraft Feb. 10, 2020. On June 22, 2024, the aircraft was moved to its final resting spot in front of the 55th ECG headquarters. Those who helped move the legendary aircraft pose for a photo.

Call, tail number 19-5591, on Aug. 23, 2024. The aircraft marks the beginning of the next chapter for the 55th ECG and the continued evolution of electronic warfare capabilities.

Though retired, the EC-130H Compass Call’s legacy remains unmatched,

inspiring future advancements in electromagnetic warfare and cementing its place in Air Force history.

- Col. Jeremy Smith
- Retired Col. Phil Acquaro

Tales told of past missions by inductees



The Tales of the 55th took place March 27, 2025, at the Beardmore Events Center in Bellevue, Nebraska.

The annual event, held in conjunction with 55th Wing Heritage Week, was established in 1999 by retired Lt. Col. Robb Hoover as a way for wing veterans to share their personal experiences with former and current members.

This year’s event featured the 2025 55th Wing Hall of Fame inductees: retired Col. Alan Feldkamp and retired Lt. Col. Thomas Thibodeaux.

Feldkamp served as commander of the 343rd Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron. His career spanned operations with Cobra Ball, Combat Sent, and Rivet Joint, where he served as an electronic warfare officer, instructor, evaluator and crew commander.

Thibodeaux held a variety of operational and staff positions within the Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth. His more than 46-year affiliation as a navigator, instructor and evaluator supported the 38th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, 55th Operational Support Squadron, and 338th Combat Training Squadron.

For those interested in participating in future Tales of the 55th mission presentations, please contact retired Lt. Col. Mike Hoskins, who organizes the event.



(Top and above) Alan Feldkamp and Thomas Thibodeaux are presented their 55th Wing Hall of Fame plaques by Col. Aaron Gray, 55th Wing deputy commander.

New birthday ball format deemed success

Attendees looked back with eye on future

More than 200 people attended the 55th Wing Birthday Ball on May 29, 2025, at Embassy Suites in La Vista, Nebraska.

“A Look Back ... and to the Future” served as the official theme for the annual event, which was established in 1979 by then-Col. Regis F.A. Urschler, commander of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing.

Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander; Col. Aaron Gray, 55th Wing deputy commander; and Chief Master Sgt. Andrew Small, 55th Wing command chief, attended alongside multiple group and squadron commanders and senior enlisted leaders from across the Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth.

For the first time in the event’s history, this year’s ball featured a combat dining out format, which was met with enthusiastic approval. The more relaxed atmosphere proved popular, particularly among active-duty members.

Guest speakers included retired Brig. Gen. Regis F.A. Urschler, retired Col. Daniel Peterson, retired Brig. Gen. Don Bacon, and current commander Col. Mark Howard.

Highlighted at the event were the 2025 55th Wing Hall of Fame inductees: retired Col. Alan Feldkamp and retired Lt. Col. Thomas Thibodeaux.

Additionally, Tech. Sgt. Daryl Agni and Senior Airman Alexander McGreal were honored as the 2025 Excellence Trophy recipients and the RC-135S Cobra Ball crew, CRAZY23, were recognized as the Maj. Bill Palm Trophy winners for their mission in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of operations.



Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander, retired Brig. Gen. Regis F.A. Urschler, former 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing commander, join others to cut the cake at the 55th Wing Birthday Ball at Embassy Suites in La Vista, Nebraska, March 29, 2025. Urschler began the annual event in 1979.



(Above) Col. Mark Howard reminisces with retired Brig. Gen. Regis F.A. Urschler at the ball. (Right) Mark “Ski” Borytsky and the 55th Wing Protocol team pose for a photo at the event.



(Left to Right) Retired Brig. Gen. Don Bacon, retired Col. Daniel Peterson, and retired Brig. Gen. Regis F.A. Urschler, all former Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth commanders, were guest speakers at the birthday ball along with current commander, Col. Mark Howard.

170th conducts first drill flight since redesignation

Unit provides crucial support to 55th Wing missions around the globe

On Feb. 2, 2025, the Nebraska Air National Guard’s 170th Group conducted its first weekend drill flight since the 238th Reconnaissance Squadron was redesignated on Oct. 18, 2024.

The flight was primarily staffed by Guard members, reflecting the 238th RS’s new dual mission.

Training & Execution

The 238th RS provided flight deck crew, electronic warfare officers, and airborne system engineers, while the 170th Maintenance Support Squadron deployed eight maintainers to prepare and launch the jet and five maintainers to recover it.

“The MXSS is one of our newest ANG squadrons, so seeing the synergy and teamwork become a reality is awesome and something to be proud of,” said Col. Wendy Squarcia, 170th Group commander.

Before the flight, crew members completed ground training exercises simulating airborne operations.

“This is only phase one, it’s the beginning of things to come,” said Master Sgt. Caleb Meyer, 170th MXSS production superintendent.

Phase two began Sunday with the successful sortie, and Meyer emphasized its importance for the unit’s growth.

“Phase three will be when we’re ready to take this to the fight as a fully manned, trained, and deployable unit,” he said.



On Feb. 2, 2025, the Nebraska Air National Guard’s 170th Group conducted its first weekend drill period flight since its 238th Reconnaissance Squadron was redesignated October 18, 2024.

Expanding Future Operations

While the 170th and 238th accomplished their goal of launching their first weekend drill sortie, they plan to integrate other organizations into future exercises.

“We plan to expand our next effort to include our Air Reserve Component teammates at the 49th Intelligence Squadron,” said Lt. Col. Brian Ross, 238th RS director of operations. “This will make it a true full-mission trainer and hopefully the beginning of a regular effort during drill weekends.”

Strengthening Partnerships

Lt. Col. Lowell Wallace, 238th RS commander, participated in Sunday’s sortie and emphasized its significance.

“This is the genesis of a lot of hard work by multiple people in the 238th RS and across the 170th Group,” he said. “Our new capability to generate independent weekend operations is critical to keeping a combat-ready force to assist 55th Wing missions at home and abroad.”

Warhawks welcome new historian, PA chief

The 55th Wing recently welcomed a new historian and public affairs chief to its ranks.

Jessica Chavez and Kris Pierce have been settling in with the largest wing in Air Combat Command.

Chavez holds a bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary studies and a master’s degree in public history from the University of Arkansas

at Little Rock. She joins the wing from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, where her husband served on active duty.

While at Ramstein, she volunteered with the Air Mobility Operations Wing history office, gaining firsthand experience in the complex responsibilities of an Air Force historian. She previously served in the U.S. Air Force as a dental technician

and has completed the Air Force Historian Course and Archival Management Course.

Pierce arrives at the wing from U.S. Strategic Command, where he served as strategic outreach and command information chief. He holds a bachelor’s degree in journalism from Ohio State University.

A U.S. Army veteran, Pierce served as an M1A1 tank crewman and instructor before transitioning to public affairs.



Chavez



Pierce



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