

# *Videmus Omnia*



SUMMER 2024



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# FROM *the* PRESIDENT



## *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth Faithful, Friends, Family & Followers,*

Your Association's "Flight 2024" continues cruising on track, altitude, air/ground speed and heading. With half a year in our contrails, much has happened since our annual takeoff! As predicted, 2024 is turning into another exciting year. Our flight has already cleared historic "turn points" and you'll see many in this latest VO edition. One notable, upfront mention is our VO editorship recently passed from Max Moore to Ryan Hansen. Ryan is an Air Force veteran, former 55th Wing Public Affairs chief, 2021 Excellence Award recipient, and current U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Omaha District Public Affairs chief. He brings years of dedicated Fightin' Fifty-Fifth service and PA writing talent to VO editorship. Welcome aboard, Ryan! As you ALL know, Ryan's assumption of this daunting task is bittersweet with Max passing on his VO "baton." Max's "Missives" (Newsletters) were the true heartbeat for all facets of Association activities for many, many years. Indeed, Max is one of only a few alums regarded by the Offutt community at-large as a surrogate wing historian. There are TRULY not enough ways or words to pass our collective thanks to the one who served as the glue binding our past, present and future. THANK YOU, Max!

So, what activities also passed under our 2024 flight path covered later by Ryan in his inaugural VO edition? Notably, the 55th Wing Birthday Ball (jointly sponsored by the Wing and the Association) and Heritage Week (Palm Trophy award, Hall of Fame Inductions and Tales of the 55th). MANY thanks go to all alums who made the week so successful. Considering these activities, however, is an outstanding opportunity to again throw out a 2025 DR (dead reconning point). Mark your calendars now for March 29, 2025, to celebrate the Fightin' Fifty-Fifth's 85th birthday. Especially notable is our biennial reunion will be held in the days prior to the ball. Please, "plan to fly and fly the plan."

Speaking of birthdays and anniversaries, the wing joyfully celebrated Offutt Field's centenary with a multi-band concert on the Parade Field in May; and in the same month, Don Kelly laid the Air Force wreath on behalf of the Association at the Omaha National Cemetery's Memorial Day service. On D-Day's anniversary, June 6, Nebraska became the final state in the union to dedicate a Vietnam Veteran's Memorial (the largest of any state!). Your Association is enshrined on a granite bench there to honor our alums who served during Sea East Asia operations. Etched in stone for all to see is: "The Sun Never Sets on the Fightin' Fifty-Fifth". Thanks to all whose generous donations made this tribute possible; but especially to those members who selflessly served during the conflict. I hope you can see this tribute soon.

As mentioned in our last Newsletter, the Association-sponsored 55th Wing Museum will receive incredible historical exposure to nearly 200 attendees at BIG SAFARI's RC-135 Program Review hosted this year by the 55th Wing in mid-July. Truly, "Flight 2024" continues and I encourage you to enjoy the flight! Plus, on August 24-25, Offutt will host the 2024 Defenders of Freedom Open House & Air Show — the first since the runway reopened!

However, the sun DOES SET on so many of our memorable members. Please take time to foster cherished memories while perusing this edition's TAPS section covering those who recently took their "final flight". They will, indeed, be with us always.

*Videmus Omnia!*  
*Spy V*

# Generational torch passed at birthday ball

## *Astronaut inspires attendees as speaker*

More than 200 people attended the 55th Wing Birthday Ball May 11, 2024, at Embassy Suites in La Vista, Nebraska.

‘The torch is passed,’ served as the official theme for the annual event, which was started in 1979 by then Col. Regis F.A. Urschler, 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing commander.

Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander, Col. Aaron Gray, 55th Wing vice commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Melissa Royster, 55th Wing command chief, were all in attendance along with multiple group and squadron commanders and senior enlisted leaders from across the Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth.



The ball provided the wing an opportunity to commemorate 100 years of Offutt Field, 30 years of the 45th Reconnaissance Squadron and 25 years of the 338th Combat Training Squadron.

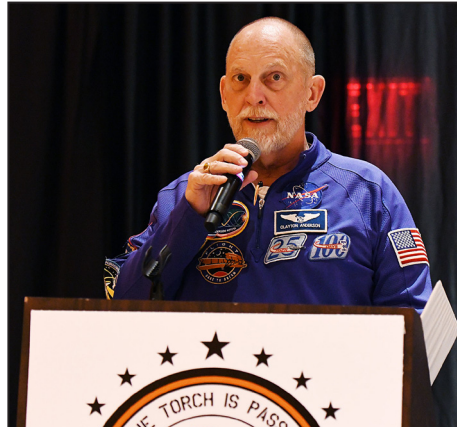
Clayton Anderson, a former NASA astronaut and native Nebraskan, served as guest speaker.

Highlighted throughout the evening were the 2024 55th Wing Hall of Fame inductees, retired Lt. Col. Robert McMillan, and retired Lt. Col. Tim Spaeth, and the 2024 Excellence Trophy recipient, Senior Airman Katie Madison, who is a controller with the 55th Wing Command Post.

In addition, the aircrew of SFAR174, an RC-135V/W Rivet Joint mission over the U.S. Central Command area of operations, were recognized as the Maj. Bill Palm Trophy winners.



*(Above)* Chief Master Sgt. Melissa Royster, 55th Wing command chief, Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander, and Bill Ernst, former 45th Reconnaissance Squadron commander, ceremoniously cut the cake at the 55th Wing Birthday Ball at Embassy Suites in La Vista, Nebraska, May 11, 2024. *(Left)* Clayton Anderson, former NASA astronaut, speaks to attendees at the event. *(Below)* Association members, wing leadership and hall of fame inductees pose for a photo at the birthday ball.



## Flood Recovery –

# Ground broken on final two campuses

Two groundbreaking ceremonies took place at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, May 3, 2024, signifying the final stages of seven flood recovery projects on the installation.

In March 2019, more than 720 million gallons of flood water covered nearly one-third of the base, affecting 137 facilities while displacing more than 3,200 personnel.

According to the Offutt Flood Rebuild Program Management Office, the \$389 million Non-Kinetic Operations Campus and \$142 million Nuclear Command, Control and Communications Campus are not only the most costly out of the seven overall, but also the most challenging.

The NKO Campus will bring together not only the 55th Operations Group's intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance squadrons on base into the 420,000 square foot facility, but will also co-locate numerous of their mission partners as well.

“We're the largest and most diverse operations group in the Air Force...and all of that will be centered and operated out of this building,” said Col. Derek Rachel, 55th OG commander. “[This facility] is absolutely critical to the operational success of the 55th Wing.”

The NC3 Campus encompasses 225,000 square feet and houses the 595th Command & Control Group. It includes a facility for the U.S. Air Force's E-4B and U.S. Navy's E-6B alert crews, which is crucial to the no-fail National Airborne Operations Center and Looking Glass missions.

“The NC3 Campus is a force multiplier,” said Col. Dave Bonn, U.S. Strategic Command J3 chief of staff, and former 55th Wing director of staff. “There is more access to mission planning facilities, advanced communications and crew accommodations robust enough to meet dynamic mission needs.”

The NC3 Campus is scheduled to be completed by February 2026, while the NKO Campus is slated for completion October 2027.

Three of the five other campuses, the Base Lake, Flightline and Logistics Readiness, will open later this year, with the Security Forces Campus set for 2025.



*Ground breaking ceremonies for the Non-Kinetic Operations and Nuclear Command, Control and Communications campuses took place at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, May 3, 2024. These are the final two projects out of seven that will bring Offutt back to normal operations following the March 2019 flood that covered one-third of the installation.*

# Tales event highlights past missions



The Tales of the 55th took place at the Beardmore Center in Bellevue, Nebraska, May 9, 2024.

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

Among those featured this year was Hank Dubuy, who was a RB-47H copilot in 1965, during the Cold War.

While flying a reconnaissance mission out of Yokota Air Base, Japan over the Sea of Japan, then Lt. Dubuy's aircraft came under attack by North Korean Mig fighters. The 55th aircraft took heavy enemy fire, while Dubuy returned fire from the tail gun, which he controlled.

Dubuy told the audience how his crew worked together analyzing the damage and devised a strategy to land the damaged aircraft at Yokota. After one failed approach, they managed to land the RB-47H safely with only three working engines despite the aircraft being nose heavy because of the loss of fuel from the rear main tank.

In addition to the stories from the past, retired Lt. Col. Robert McMillan, and retired Lt. Col. Tim Spaeth were inducted into the 55th Wing Hall of Fame during the event.



*Robert McMillan and Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander.*



*Tim Spaeth and Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander.*

McMillan served in the 343rd Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron as an electronic warfare officer, instructor, evaluator, crew commander, RC-135 initial qualification training manual systems chief and the 55th Wing's senior standardization and evaluation crew.

Spaeth served as a navigator, instructor, evaluator and deployed operations officer in the 38th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron and 55th Operational Support Squadron as well as on the 55th Wing staff.

In addition to the inductees, also recognized during the event were the aircrew of SFARI174, who were the 2024 Maj. Bill Palm Trophy recipients.

SFAR174 led an RC-135V/W Rivet Joint over the U.S. Central Command area of operations that was directed by the President of the United States.

The SFAR174 crew demonstrated superior airmanship and tenacity while conducting sustained intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations as a part of the 763rd Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron.

The selfless dedication and service before self-attitude of the SFAR174 crew ensured delivery of critical threat warning, target queuing, and humanitarian support efforts throughout the U.S. and allied forces activities in the AOR. This culminated in a successful noncombatant evacuation operation.

If you would like to participate in the Tales of the 55th, please contact retired Lt. Col. Mike Hoskins, who now leads the event.



*Hank Dubuy discusses his 1965 mission as a RB-47H copilot in 1965, during the heart of the Cold War.*



*Col. Aaron Gray, 55th Wing vice commander, and Mike Hoskins, Tales of the 55th organizer.*



*The recipients of the Maj. Bill Palm Trophy.*

# Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedicated

On June 6, 2024, the 80th anniversary of D-Day, roughly 1,000 attendees witnessed the official dedication of the Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Papillion, Nebraska.

Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen and former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, were joined by national, state and local dignitaries and veterans, to dedicate the memorial which has been many years in the making.

Located south of 180th Street and Nebraska Highway 370 in Papillion, the Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the final state memorial to be so consecrated following the previous 49 states and Puerto Rico. However, it is the largest.

A restored U.S. Army UH-1 Huey, frozen in flight above one end of the memorial plaza, is part of a battle scene depicted with statues of soldiers rescuing an injured brother-in-arms. Visitors can press a button and hear the Huey chop overhead as statues of two more soldiers hanging out the aircraft door stand armed and ready to provide cover.

In attendance was retired Col. Joe Spivey, 55th Wing Association president, and many other 55th Wing alumni.

Featured at the memorial are two 55th Wing themed benches. One quotes the famous, 'The Sun Never Set on the Fightin' Fifty-Fifth,' while the other highlights the RC-135M Combat Apple, which conducted communications and electronic intelligence mission throughout Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

The site is truly memorable, fitting of recognizing all who served in that conflict. The 55th Wing Association is proud to be associated with it and encourages everyone to visit.



*The Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated June 6, 2024, in Papillion, Nebraska. Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen and former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, were joined by national, state and local dignitaries and veterans, to dedicate the memorial.*



*A restored U.S. Army UH-1 Huey, frozen in flight above one end of the memorial plaza.*



*Association members Jim Maloney and Dave Wolfe*



*Joe Spivey, 55th Wing Association president.*

# Memorial Day – Alumni honor those who gave all



*Jim Maloney, Chris Canada, Felix Ungerman, Dave Wolfe, Max Moore, Jim Thomas, Joe Spivey and Dan Donovan.*

The 55th Wing Association took time out of their schedules over Memorial Day weekend to honor those brave men and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Ceremonies took place May 27, 2024, at the Fort Crook Cemetery on Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, and the Omaha National Cemetery in Papillion, Nebraska.

The association would like to thank retired Lt. Col. Johnny Johnson, who has provided the audio support to the Omaha National Cemetery's annual ceremony for many years. Johnson is behind the scenes, humble contributor and a great association coordinator and advocate to this day.



*Joe Spivey, 55th Wing Association president, and Don Kelley, association member.*

# NEWS & NOTES

## TAPS



### **SAVAGE, Wilma “Ann,” 90, March 12, 2024**

Wilma “Ann” Hart Savage was the wife of retired Col. Walter Savage, who was an RB-47 pilot, who survived a crash at Incirlick Air Base, Turkey, in 1965. She is survived by Walter, sons Walter Savage Jr. (Kelly), Mark Savage (Lisbeth), and daughter Karen Nelson (Steve); grandchildren Kara Haley, Neil Savage, Holly Savage, Rachel Savage, Ben Savage, Aaron Savage, Luke Savage, Rebecca Nelson and Emily Nelson; and great-grandchildren Conrad Haley, Elijah Savage, Sloane Savage and Ava Savage.

### **ARBUCKLE, James H., 81, May 21, 2024**

Retired Lt. Col. Jim Arbuckle was a tanker navigator who served in the 82nd Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron in Kadena Air Base, Japan, and served as wing executive officer. He is survived by his wife, Pamela; daughter, Jennifer Seeger (Tim); son, Steven Arbuckle; grandchildren, Reese, Davin and Claire Seeger; sister, Elizabeth Doran (Dennis); sisters-in-law, Barbara Reese, Judith Browne; nephews, Charles, Bradley, Jeffrey Doran and Michael Browne.

### **STEWART, Gary, R., 77, May 22, 2024**

Retired Col. Reggie Stewart was an EC-47 and RC-135 pilot serving throughout the 55th Wing at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, as well as at multiple other locations around the globe. He is survived by his son, Gary Todd Stewart of Dayton, Ohio; daughter, Jenna “Ginny Lynn” Stewart of Bellevue, Nebraska; brothers, Sammy Dee Stewart and Craig Wyatt Stewart both of Tulsa, Oklahoma; former spouse, Ginger Stewart of Tulsa.

### **MORROW, James, XX, XX, 2024**

XX.

*\*Please send TAPS notifications to Ryan Hansen at [rynohansen@hotmail.com](mailto: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.*

# NEWS & NOTES

## SHOPPING



Association items make great gifts for birthdays, holidays and other occasions for current and former 55th Wing member! These following items are now for sale on the association website.



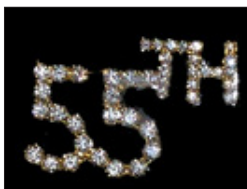
*Long Sleeve 55th Association Shirt  
Red, White, Navy Blue. (S-XXXL). Cost \$63  
+ \$6.50 Shipping (\$69.50).*



*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).*



### **FASHION PINS!**

These pins make a great birthday or anniversary accessory gift, or holiday stocking stuffer.

If interested, please see contact info below.

Erwin's Jewelers  
223 W. Mission Ave.  
Bellevue, NE. 68005  
(402) 291-2454

Costs are \$9 for the pin and \$4 for shipping.

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.*



**AUGUST**  
**24 25**



**OFFUTT AFB**

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# DEFENDERS OF FREEDOM

AIR & SPACE SHOW