

### 93. Crewdogs and Hellcat Jackets

Crewdogs and their jackets have been around for years. Many of us in the *Fighting Fifty-Fifth* wore them faithfully every Friday to Happy Hour at the O'Club at Offutt AFB and enjoyed wearing them. Maj Gen Bob Beckel, the SAC Chief of Staff when I was the 55<sup>th</sup> SRW Commander, told me continually that wearing those Hellcat flight jackets with our flight suits was a violation of AF Reg 35-10, and I needed to ensure the entire organization stopped wearing them. He finally cornered me one Friday afternoon at the O'Club, and gave me one week to terminate wearing them!

I quickly called a few crew members deployed to Kadena AB, explained my problem, and asked to see if they could go quickly to Gate 2 Street, where we always had our Hellcat Jackets made, and see if we could get one made with 4 stars and 'GENERAL JACK CHAIN, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND' embroidered on it, plus a few pictures of our SAC Reece aircraft, the E-4, and the Looking Glass models and patches on it. We had a re-deployer coming back to Offutt the following Thursday, so time was of the essence!

Most everyone knew that Gen Chain and I were friends as I had worked for him at the Pentagon. I raced to his office Friday morning with his jacket in a briefcase so Gen Beckel wouldn't see it. The exec let me in, I presented the jacket to Gen Chain, and he loved it - said we in SAC needed to loosen up a little more! As I was about to leave, he stopped me and asked, "Larry, thanks, but I know you're up to something - what is it?" I carefully explained my problem and he was all smiles!

He asked how we should execute this plan, and I suggested he ask Gen Beckel to come to the club for a drink after quitting time. Knowing Gen Beckel would come, I then asked Gen Chain's exec to tell him when Gen Beckel departed HQ SAC for the Club. When the exec told Gen Chain that Gen Beckel was on the way, Gen Chain left a few minutes behind him.



When Gen Beckel arrived at the Club, it was jammed with flight suits and Hellcat jackets! He slowly backed me into a corner of the bar, and began explaining that I was violating AF Regs, and disobeying a senior officer's orders. About this time Gen Chain walked in, walked up behind Gen Beckel chewing me out (rather gently) and tapped him on the shoulder. When Gen Beckel turned around, Gen Chain said rather loudly, "Hey Bobby, I've got my Jacket, where's yours?"

Needless to say, there was lots of cheering and all had a good time! Gen Beckel said to me, "You won this one, but I'll get even" - but he smiled when he said it!

- Gen Larry Mitchell