



Videmus Omnia

55th STRAT RECON WING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2002

REUNION SAVANNAH, GA, 15-18 MAY, 2002

The 55th SRW Association will hold its 22nd reunion from **15-18 May 2002** in Pooler, GA, just outside of **Savannah**, as part of a gathering of other Strategic Air Command veterans at the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum.

The official name of the reunion is **SAC 2002**. **Tommy Harrison** is the overall chairman and he is working with **Judy Walker** of the Museum events staff. Tommy can be reached at (407) 886-1922, or e-mail TGHarrison@aol.com; and Ms. Walker at e-mail Mighty8events@aol.com, or (921) 748-8888.

The 55th SRWA attendees will billet at the **Comfort Inn and Suites** about a mile from the museum just across I-95. Shuttle service to the events will be available. We have all of their 150

rooms booked at a rate of \$55 plus tax. Vinny Patel is the manager.

You must call the motel direct in order to get the reunion rate. Phone number to call for reservations is, long distance, **(912) 748-6464**. **Registration deadline for this hotel is 1 April.**

Remember, you will be attending the SAC 2002 Reunion in the 55th SRW Association contingent.

Delta Air Lines and Enterprise Car Rental have special discounts for the SAC 2002 Reunion. Detailed info on all that, plus RV accommodations, and much more is in the three-page registration package accompanying this newsletter.

All forms and payment for the reunion and events must be received at the Museum by 30 April 2002.

Whether there will be a separate hospitality room is yet to be determined. But, there are lounge and meeting room facilities at our HQ. The Association does **not** have a point man in place in Savannah, so the planning and

logistics for running our own hospitality suite make it unlikely.

There will be **Association Board of Directors and membership meetings**, but since this is a 'mini-reunion' within the official SAC 2002 reunion, **no** election of officers is on the agenda. That will happen in Dayton in September 2003.

All activities, including registration, will take place at the 8th AF museum, unless otherwise indicated. *(The registration forms and latest information will be on the Museum's web site at www.mightyeighth.org and on the 55SRW Assn web page, as well.)*

The main hotel for the SAC vets is the Best Western Bradbury next to the museum's parking lot. They have all 92 suites reserved at \$74 plus tax. **Their lobby will be the hospitality gathering site to accommodate all the reunion attendees.** It is believed the **55thers** attending will have no trouble establishing a 'beachhead' at which to convene therein for the

usual rounds of camaraderie and friendship renewals.

The Jamison Inn next door to the Bradbury has 55 rooms at \$55 plus tax and there are numerous other hotels/motels in the immediate area. The three specifically mentioned above are either new, or newly remodeled.

Each hotel has an excellent continental breakfast, and there are a Cracker Barrel and other eateries from which to choose for more hearty fare. Other hotels in the area are listed in the package and on the Mighty Eighth web site.

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About Savannah: it was founded in February 1733 as the thirteenth and final English colony, and has Revolutionary War and Civil War history. It is a classic Southern scenic and historical city. The city can be toured numerous ways from sight seeing companies, by carriage, Old Town trolley, Old Savannah tours from the visitors center, and there are harbor riverboat cruises available, as well.

Must see attractions are the Savannah History Museum, the Owens-Thomas House and Museum, the Green-Meldrim Home used as Gen Sherman's HQ, and Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum, among many other sights. There are historic forts within easy travel time for those buffs. For more info go to www.Savannahvisit.com or get a tour book from AAA.

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The following reunion agenda allows time for sightseeing and enjoying the city. And of course, you can always arrive early or stay after the reunion to make the visit more memorable.

SAC 2002 REUNION AGENDA

Wednesday – May 15:
Registration at the 8th Museum 1200-1700 hrs.

Thursday - May 16:
Registration at the 8th AF museum. The obligatory golf session at 0900 on the Crosswinds Course just north of the hotels/museum. Cost \$30 per hacker. For those interested, a tour of historic Savannah starting at 0900 is available for \$20 per with transportation from the Museum. **An informal mixer** is scheduled in the evening hosted by the Birthplace Chapter, 8th AF Historical Society.

Friday – 17th: A memorial service will be held in Chapel at mid-morning. There will be lunch and SAC business meeting. **This is a very important meeting, the primary purpose of which will be to determine the structure and organization to provide for future SAC reunions.** (*The 55th SRW membership meeting is TBD*). The evening's event will be an **informal (casual) dinner** (*flight suits, party suits, jocks and socks, whatever. NOTAM for pilots – please wear shoes.....uh, on your feet.*)

Saturday is a free day for hospitality gathering, sight seeing, basking, shopping or any of the many activities offered by this picturesque community. The reunion winds up with a **gala banquet** celebrating the Mighty 8th AF Heritage Museum's sixth anniversary that evening with all former SAC members as honored guests. **Dress is coat and tie.**

Sunday is departure day.

See the registration form accompanying this newsletter for costs of registration and events,

times of activities, where to mail, and lots of other info. Send it in soon, make your travel arrangements, and get your own bad self there!!!!

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings and a very happy 2002,

Since our last *Videmus Omnia* newsletter, which actually kicked off the fund-raiser for the 55th SRW Association memorial monument, I am happy to report that the response has been overwhelming, and we have far exceeded our expectations and the original \$10,000 goal. As a result, we find that we can do much more than anticipated.

Additionally, because of the large number of major donors (\$50 or more), we found that there was inadequate space on the back of the monument for all those names. A recommendation was made that we consider a brick patio around the monument, and individuals donating \$50 or more would have their names (and other limited data) engraved in their personalized bricks.

We liked the idea, so anyone who wants his or her brick in the patio, **and hasn't yet given**, should send in the \$50 necessary to cover the cost to our treasurer. Any **previous** donor who has given less than \$50, can send an **additional** amount to bring the total donation **up to** \$50 to get a brick.

There is a form in the newsletter that each major donor will need to complete legibly and mail to me. The information will be used to

engrave the bricks, so it must be concise and correct.

Because of this change, and many other good suggestions for the memorial monument, I appointed a Planning Committee to ensure that our plan is well thought out and will be a beautiful addition to the USAF Museum's "Memorial Gardens." It will be **our** gift and legacy for future generations.

The committee, chaired by **Max Moore**, has been meeting to put the recommended final touches on the plan (*which will be discussed in another article in more detail*). (See page 6)

Once formalized, the recommended plan will be presented to the Board of Directors for their approval. After which, I will present it to the Museum's staff for their approval.

The annual 55th Birthday Ball is scheduled for February 23rd, and we will be adding five 55th inductees to the Hall of Fame; as well as naming the 2001 recipient of the **55th SRW Association Award of Excellence**. It's a wonderful weekend that begins Friday evening with an informal get together at the Stripes Club for "*Tales of the 55th*."

Looks like Tommy Harrison has planned a terrific program for our "mini-reunion" in conjunction with the Strategic Air Command 2002 reunion at the Mighty Eighth Air Force museum in Savannah, GA, May 16-18th. The 55th will be setting up camp at the Comfort Inn & Suites. Above is a more detailed article discussing the reunion plans, so I won't dwell on this other than to say we will be having a membership meeting, minus the elections, to go over the details of the memorial project discussed above.

I'm sure that Tommy could use some help, especially from anyone in the immediate Savannah area. If you want to help, please contact Tommy via email at TGHarrison@aol.com.

Looking forward to seeing you, so y'all come, hear.

Videmus Omnia, Bill



**THE 55TH STRATEGIC
RECONNAISSANCE
WING ASSOCIATION
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

The 55th SRW Association Annual Award for Excellence is awarded to that individual, group, or organization that best exemplifies the basic tenants of the **55th SRW Association**. Those tenants are to foster and advance the ideals of patriotism and love of country.

The Award is a large, impressive permanent trophy, displayed prominently between presentations in the lobby of the 55th Wing Support Group Headquarters (Building C). It is the busiest administration building on Offutt.

The annual winners will have their names inscribed on the base of the trophy and will be presented a smaller replica.

The award winners will be announced at the annual 55th Wing Birthday Ball and at **55th SRWA** reunions.

To be eligible for this award, nominees must be: Members of the 55thWing during the calendar year **and** any of the following:

a. The Wing nominee for any Department of Defense and/or Air Force special trophy and/or award.

b. A winner of any Wing annual award.

c. Or nominated from at-large by the Association, its Board of Directors, or any of its members.

The Selection Committee shall be comprised of members of the Omaha Caucus of the 55th SRWA, and one non-voting advisor from the 55th Wing (55th Wing Chief of Staff or 55th Support Group Deputy Commander.)

The initial recipient of the inaugural award for his outstanding contributions in 2000, was **LtCol Ricky McMahon**, 338th Combat Crew Training Squadron Commander. He was recognized at the Wing Birthday Ball in February 2001 and again at the reunion in Melbourne, FL last May.

The selection committee, chaired by **Mike Cook**, will meet in early/mid-February to choose the honoree for calendar year 2001.



If life deals you lemons, make lemonade. If life deals you tomatoes, make Bloody Marys. (*Bring your own vodka.*)



TREASURER'S REPORT

The Association, as of 31 December 2001, had a checking account balance of \$11,815.49, plus \$5,577.28 invested in a CD.

Near term expenses include those associated with the Birthday Ball and the mailing of this newsletter.

The Memorial Monument Fund accounting is separate and is **not** included in this report.



MEMBERSHIP REPORT

As of 31 December 2001, the Association had 974 members in good standing, 161 of which are widows and 55th Wing senior staff positions who exempt from paying dues. This is a decrease of 16 members since 30 June 2001.

A few new members have joined since the first of the year.

Trivia item – The Association has members in 49 states, DC, Guam and Puerto Rico. We need a rep in North Dakota! Anyone want to move there?

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The four-digit year your dues expire(d) can be found in the upper right hand corner of the mailing label for this newsletter. (Now go look for the envelope you discarded. *Oops.*)

Those who donated \$100 or more to the memorial fund have had their membership extended for three years.

If your dues have expired, \$10.00 is due. \$25 will update your membership for three years.

Note: if your dues expired in 2000, this is the last newsletter you will receive unless you renew your dues.

Please remit dues to **55SRW Association** and mail to Errol Hoberman as soon as practical. **The enclosed Association-addressed envelope is for your convenience.**

New members receive the Association's dual-shield lapel pin when they join. Members desiring replacement or additional pins can get them from Errol for \$5.00 prepaid. Ernst and Moore have supplies, as well, so members in their local area can get the pins from them for \$3.00 without the S/H.

A list of new and returned members, and changes of address to supplement the 2001 Association roster appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

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55th WING BIRTHDAY BALL

The 55th Wing will hold its 24th annual Wing Birthday Ball on February 23, 2002 at The Holiday Inn Central in Omaha.

The gala was founded by **Regis Urschler** when he was wing commander in 1979 and the tradition continues.

The event recognizes the heritage and lineage of the WWII **55th Fighter Group**, through the **55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing**, to the present day **55th Wing**. This will be a celebration of the sixty-first anniversary of the activation of the 55th Pursuit Group at Hamilton Field, CA, in January 1941, and the **fifty-fifth** anniversary of establishment the 55th Reconnaissance Group at MacDill Field, FL, in 1947.

This year's theme is: "*Global Connection – Force Protection*". The intent is to recognize the Wing's varied and vital missions and the role they play in our nation's defense.

Emphasis will show how those objectives are met through a wing-wide effort, especially in the present surge of the war on terrorism.

Major Scott Meeker and **Lt Amy Mathias** of the 55th Communications Group head the Ball committee.

(Notes: Ernst and Moore serve on the Ball committee as special advisors. And the Association

contributes \$1000 to support the festivities.)

The second annual presentation of the **55th SRW Association Award for Excellence** trophy will be made and new 55th Wing **Hall of Fame** inductees will be announced.

This year, **Will Palm, Gene Posa, Dean Phillips and Oscar Goforth** will be honored as a composite induction. They perished on 1 July 1960 when shot down without warning by a Soviet fighter in international air space over the Barents Sea.

Belatedly, they join **John McKone** and **Bruce Olmstead**, who survived the shutdown and seven months in Lubyanka Prison in Moscow, in the Hall of Fame.

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On Friday, February 22, at 1400 at the 55th Wing HQ, the Wing's "Wall of Fame" will be dedicated. The length of the long hall just outside the Command Section will display the portraits of all inductees of the Wing Hall of Fame. The centerpiece will be the original lithograph of nineteen representatives of Fightin' Fifty-Fifth history first presented in January 1999.

Following at 1600 at the Offutt Stripes Club (formerly the NCO Club), the **55th SRW Association** and the Association of Old Crows' Strategic Roost will once again co-sponsor an informal program, the "*Tales of the 55th*". **Robb Hoover** will put the program together by inviting former 55thers to relate their experiences.

All in all, it is one more occasion for a gathering of 55th alumni that makes the Birthday Ball weekend a mini-reunion in and of itself. More of you are encouraged to come see what this is all about.

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T A P S



J. M. R. Audette, died 3 Dec 01; Daytona Beach, FL; wife, **Margaret**.

Robert P. Green, died on/about 25 Nov 01; Westfield, MA; wife, **Molly**; RB-50 crewmember, Ramey AFB, PR.

Dorothy Hayford, 22 Sep 00; Whitefield, ME; wife of **Elbert D.**, RB-29/50 pilot, 338th SRS at Ramey AFB, PR, Forbes AFB, KS.

George Horn, 28 Feb 01, wife **Mary Ann**; Fairview Hts, IL; George was a photo/gunner, 338SRS, RB-50s, Ramey and Forbes.

Robert E. Jaecques, 10 Oct 2001; **Sue**; Cape Coral, FL; Bob was an EC/RC-pilot and instructor. Served as 38th SRS commander at Offutt AFB, NE.

Cecil D. Johnson, 21 Sep 99, **Simone**; Albany, GA. Flight engineer on RB-29/50s in 338th at Ramey and Forbes.

Charles Johnson, 25 Feb 01, **Shirley**; Sheridan, OR.

William Middleton, 23 Mar 01, Boulder City, NV.

Jacob P. Rast, 18 July 01; **Rita**; St. Charles, MO; RB-47 pilot. Left AF in 1959 but remained in the AF Reserve. Flew with TWA until retirement in 1991. Worked as FAA safety inspector until 1997.

Dottie Sarto, 1 Aug 00; wife of **Joseph**; Prattville, AL; Joe served as an RB-50 navigator at Ramey and Forbes.

Fred Schmitz, 7 Aug 01; RB-50 pilot in 338th at Ramey and Forbes.

Richard Scuderi, 7 July 01; **Peg**; Warner Robins, GA; longtime RC-135 EWO and worked at SAC Recon Center at Offutt.

Leta Smith, 29 Aug 01; widow of **"Jigs" Casey**; Irving, TX. Both interred in Oklahoma City, OK.

Robert "Red" D. Williams, 25 May 01; **Marian**; Mathews, VA; RB-47 EWO in 343SRS at Forbes. Also served at Yokota AB, Japan, SAC HQ at Offutt, and at TAC HQ at Langley AFB, VA.

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RECON RENDEZVOUS AT DAYTON IN 2003

The Association is committed to holding a reunion in Dayton, OH, during the week **after** Labor Day 2003. This reunion is intended to coincide with the opening/dedication of the Cold War Annex to the US Air Force Museum near Wright-Patterson AFB, OH.

The "queen", or centerpiece, of the exhibit is to be an RB-47H, tail number 4299, which flew operational strategic reconnaissance missions for the 55th SRW at Forbes AFB, KS, in the 1960s. Restoration of the ol' bird is progressing well.

John (Jack) Kovacs remains our man in place, and he has been formulating and coordinating reunion plans for the last two years. He continues to keep the Board updated on the status of the restoration process, and he is in frequent contact with **MGen (Ret) Charles Metcalf**, Air Force Museum Director, and the

museum event and restoration staffs.

Here is Jack's latest report:

Status of RB-47H 4299:

Work continues to be on schedule with a target finishing date of late fall 2002. That's **not** a misprint....2002. Originally, they were looking at finishing in late spring of 2003, about the time the new annex to the USAF Museum (AFM) was to be completed. But, once ground was broken for the new building, the contractor determined the restoration could be completed by late fall 2002.

This of course had an impact on the finish date for A/C 4299. Once the contractor declares the building ready for displays, the Museum has about two weeks to move and position airplanes in the new building before the contractor puts the end of the building up and "locks the door".

There have been few photos posted lately, as there's not much a viewer could see in a photo to determine progress, but believe me, they are still working the details.

The next big phase for 4299 will be attaching the wings to the fuselage; that is tentatively scheduled for the end of January 2002. The company that took it apart in Kansas will return to put it together again. A meeting was held between them and the AFM in November to determine just what equipment and space would be needed.

As part of the wing attachment procedures, the wheels will finally be put on 4299. In fact for the procedure, an additional set of wheels will be attached for balancing the fuselage.

Once the wheels are on, and the wings attached with the outrigger gear maintaining

balance, more restorative actions can be taken to the belly area behind the crew compartment. There is a lot of corrosion present, and without the tires on, the fuselage sat too low for anyone to work under it comfortably.

The opportunity to obtain "yoke caps" from two gracious donors presented itself in November. The last I heard was that the AFM Collections Division is working the donor process for receiving the "caps".

And just as an item of interest, the AFM welcomes donations of just about any item relating to the RB-47H era, including flying clothing, books, bags, knee pads and photos. The process involves the AFM sending the donor a "kit", which contains a donor form (so the Museum can give you credit), and mailing forms so it doesn't cost the donor anything.

Contact the USAF Museum Collections Division, who can help in the process; or Jack Kovacs at 564 Sartell Dr, Fairborn, OH 45324-5745, Ph: (937) 879-1390, e-mail j1a2c3k4@aol.com.

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Status of "Recon Rendezvous 2003"

Preparations are well under way for this event on **3-6 September 2003**. In case you don't know, this get together will not only involve the 55th SRW Association, but other USAF Cold War reconnaissance-involved organizations. It could be one of the largest events for this area, with some estimating up to 800 people attending.

The USAF Museum is co-sponsoring the event with us. For those who have never visited the AFM, it has one of the best and

largest collections of aircraft in the world. **And admission is free!**

The entire primary hotel is booked (**Holiday Inn, I-675 Fairborn, OH**) and we are planning on deals for overflow with nearby hotels.

The AFM has approved our use of the Museum for our requested symposium (AFM theater will be great for this), Memorial dedication, and two dining events amid the aircraft displays in the AFM.

The RB-47H will be on display and will be opened for several periods of limited time for our people (not open to the public) to climb up into the cockpit and look around for old times sake.

Other events being worked are a golf outing at the military course on Wright-Patterson AFB, and some tours to entertain the non-golfers and non-symposium goers.

Please note, for those who may want to extend their stay, that 2003 is the 100th anniversary of the Wright Brothers flight, as well as the bicentennial of the State of Ohio. There will be events going on here in Dayton all year long.

More on this in future issues and on the Association web site, as details develop.

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55th STRATEGIC RECONNAISSANCE WING MEMORIAL

The membership will recall that in the July 2001 issue of *Videmus Omnia*, and with a subsequent letter in October requesting donations, the drive began to fund a fitting memorial to those who served and died while aiding in winning the Cold War by

flying strategic reconnaissance missions.

The initial idea was to put a piece of engraved granite on a base in the midst of similar monuments at the USAF Museum's Memorial Gardens. The cost to do that was estimated at \$10,000 for the monument, base, groundwork and a perpetual maintenance fee (paid upfront).

The Association Board of Directors reasoned that if each of the nearly 1000 members donated just \$10 apiece, reaching the goal would be easily attainable. That effort was supported at the reunion membership meeting last May in Melbourne, FL.

Donations began rolling in immediately after the last issue of the newsletter and about \$3500 was raised. Then the request letter went out in October, and wow! No one anticipated the resulting outpouring of generosity. It was overwhelming, my friends.

Over 250 members sent in \$50 or more. Some **widows** have given \$50, \$100, \$200, **even \$300!** The largest gift was from one family - **\$1105!**

But, you know what? As of this writing, **only 40%** of the membership has responded.

A major result of this gratifying support is the **opportunity** for the planners to do so much more than the original concept. They can propose a truly outstanding and memorable expression of remembrance to all those valiant and under appreciated Cold Warriors of SAC recon. Recognition long overdue.

To that end, as Pres. Ernst stated, plans are moving forward for other potential elements around and near the monument in an expanded setting. A seven-foot granite monument on a 54" wide

base will dominate it. Our memorial will be placed in what can become the "recon section" in a semi-circle of trees in the Memorial Gardens.

Thus far, the Big Safari and the Freedom Through Vigilance Associations (Security Service) are committed to having monuments there. Other groups, such as the Dragon Lady (U2) and Blackbird (SR-71) veterans, have been contacted and encouraged to commission and locate monuments of their own in the same plot.

The Planning Committee appointed by the president, chaired by me, consists of Reg Urschler, Robb Hoover, Mike Cook and **Jim Maloney**. **We knew the first tenet is that this is to be the 55th SRW Association's memorial, paid for by member donors.**

It was a daunting task and we did not enter it lightly.

Our charge was to make **recommendations** for the dedication wording on the monument; what other representations should go on it; how to commemorate those who lost their lives; how to recognize donors; and other issues that have come in from far and wide throughout the Association membership on how to develop the memorial.

There has been plenty of input, and more to come, I'm confident. **I can assure you it will be an all encompassing and that every segment of 55th strat recon history will be represented.**

By the time you read this, the committee should have finished its work, and the recommendation report given to the Association president. He will present same to the Association's Board of

Directors to go forward for more massaging and **a final approval process.**

Jack Kovacs lives near the Museum and has seen most all the monuments there several times, including the Flying Tigers, Tuskegee Airmen and many others. **He testifies that ours has the potential to be the most impressive one yet.**

The goal is to have a solid handle on all this as soon as practical so the contractor and Museum can get the memorial readied in time for the September 2003 reunion in Dayton.

An update on the entire picture will be made at the Savannah reunion, in future issues of *Videmus Omnia*, and on the Association web page.

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Boys and girls, **it is not too late to contribute** to this project, which must be near and dear to all our hearts. No one will be deprived of the opportunity to participate in this endeavor.

We are still suggesting \$10, the same as a year's Association dues. Those who wish to contribute less or more than \$10, it will be gratefully accepted.

Contributors who donate \$50 or more, will be recognized with an engraved brick in the memorial patio. **If you donated less than \$50**, but now want to bring your contribution up to that, send the **difference** to the treasurer, noting the added amount, and you will get a brick.

A donation of \$100 or more garners a three-year membership extension, as well. If you have already donated \$100, your membership has been extended three years. If you have previously made a donation and would like to **increase** it to

\$100 to take advantage of the membership extension, see the above paragraph.

Your donation, in whatever amount, is totally tax deductible.

So, please send what you can as soon as you can. Make the checks payable to the **55th SRWA Memorial**, so as to distinguish from membership dues. Then mail it to: 55th SRW Association, Treasurer Errol Hoberman, 6441 Avenida De Galvez, Navarre, FL 32566.

Videmus Omnia, and God Bless America! Max

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Old age comes at a very bad time.

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LETTERS AND STUFF

Hi Max, Thank you for the column (*Old Crows Never Die, Eugene Curtin, Bellevue Leader, published in the July 2001 newsletter*) and your response. (*Note: both were published in the July 2000 issue of Videmus Omnia.*) Truly an excellent and insightful article. It must have been a super gathering of crows.

Your 'thank you' letter was also quite excellent – right on the money- as usual.

I don't think anyone could ever have the honor of serving in the **Fightin' Fifty-Fifth** without gaining a sincere appreciation for the dedication and professionalism of its magnificent members. The 'historic connection' started by **Reg (Urschler)** and perpetuated by you and the 55th Association is vitally important to the continued health of the organization.

Keep up the good work.

Don (From an e-mail by Col (Ret) Don Krause, former 55th SRW Commander, Sun City, AZ)

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Errol: I've sent you a check which should cover my dues until 2004. I also want you and all the other officers of the 55SRWA to know how much all (of) us members appreciate the work you fellows do. The web site is outstanding! Thanks. **Luis Oliver** (from an e-mail 09/03/01), Las Vegas, NV.

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Really sorry I missed the (Melbourne) Florida reunion. I'm not sure about the (Savannah) Georgia one either. I hope to God I can make the one in Dayton.

I think the Association is great. It is always a joy to see old faces. The new ones are great, too.

Having put in ten years at Forbes, I and many others, put a lot of hours making sure those birds were ready. We were at all the places the air-dogs were. We laughed, worked, wondered, felt lonely, happy, etc., just like everyone else. I think it was harder then, than now.

Being TDY all over the world wasn't broadcast like it is now. We did our duty with our own kind, and (had) our stories and thoughts we shared only amongst ourselves. Times change.

Looking forward to the next reunion I can make.

Donald R. Eddins, MSgt USAF-Ret, Pleasant Grove, UT.

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(Editor's Note: Many, many members wrote letters or notes with their donations to the memorial monument fund. Following are but a few, representative of the many.)

Thank you for sending me the latest newsletter, and especially the membership book. There are several names listed of men and

women Don and I knew well during our sojourn in Alaska at Eielson AFB. Don flew RB-47s.

We were transferred to C-130s at Mountain Home AFB in Idaho. Wherever we went, we met great people. But, the two of us were each other's best friend. I miss him every second of every day. I look forward to possibly attending the next reunion.

Please accept my donation on behalf of (me and) my husband, **Donald M. Armstrong**, LtCol, USAF (Ret), deceased at age 80 (on) 1/24/01. I know he would join me in approval of such a memorial. Good luck.

Sincerely, **Eve Armstrong**

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Dear Errol: I just received the **Videmus Omnia** and was excited to read about the reunion last May. I was sorry not to be able to come. Had planned to be there, but at the last minute, had too many things going on. We were planning to leave on a two-month trip, to include a family reunion in New Mexico. **Ann** and I (ultimately) traveled 9,200 miles in our little RV and had a wonderful time.

I wanted to get my check in early to support the memorial monument which is to be dedicated at the reunion in Dayton in (September) 2003.

It is a rare day that passes that I don't think of the two crew members, **Gary Jacobs** and **Al Parsons**, who lost their lives in the (RB-47) crash of 3 April 1965 at Incirlik AB, Turkey.

The **55th Strat Recon Wing Association** is a great organization and I greatly admire the guys who have kept it going. I think of you often.

Thank and best wishes, **Walter (Savage), Green Mountain, NC.**

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To Errol Hoberman: I'm donating to the 55th SRW memorial monument fund in memory of my husband, LtCol (Ret) **Marion E. (Ed) Minor, Jr**, who passed away March 28, 1995. I would like his name (to be) on a (brick).

Ed was so proud and honored to be a member of the 55th **Association**. He treasured the love and friendship of those who worked and flew with him.

Thank you! **Annie Elizabeth Minor, Milledgeville, GA.**

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Dear Mr. Hoberman: Enclosed is my donation to help toward the monument that is to be donated to the US Air Force Museum through the voluntary donations of the 55th **SRW Association**. It is an honor to be able to make this small donation.

I remember only too well the sacrifices made by the men of the 38th, 338th and 343rd (Strategic Reconnaissance) Squadrons, not to mention the efforts of the remainder of the wing and the families involved.

I am proud to have taken a small part in that effort. Sincerely, **William E. Buck, Warrenton, VA.**

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Dear Fellow **55 SRW Association** member: Enclosed you will find my contribution toward the commissioning of the memorial. I plan to add to it in the future, but feel this advance will suffice for the time being.

I think the membership would like to know there is a monument to the aircrews lost from Borinquen Army Air Field (later named Ramey AFB) dating from 1939 to 1974. I am not too sure, but if any 55th SRW aircrews were lost during the time the 55th

was stationed here at Ramey AFB, they certainly are represented.

This monument was originally built in 1939 on the grounds of what was the base cemetery. It was later located in front of the base service club prior to base closing. That is now part of the University of Puerto Rico campus.

At present the Ramey AFB Historical Association, of which I pride in being a member, has a restoration project for this monument as it has been neglected for all the years since the base closed in 1974.

Please keep up the good work. Cordially yours, **Enrique (Harry) Torres Cajigas**, *Anasco, PR.*

(Ed. Note: The 55th SRW was at Ramey 1951-52 in RB-29s.)

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55th WING EARNS AIR FORCE OUTSTANDING UNIT AWARD

The 55th Wing was awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period June 1, 1999, to May 2001.

The AFOUA is given by the Secretary of the Air Force to units for exceptionally meritorious or outstanding achievement.

“This is well deserved recognition,” said **BrigGen Greg Power**, 55th Wing Commander. “(The) hard work and mission accomplishments have not gone unnoticed by our leaders, and I’m proud to be on this team.”

The largest unit in Air Combat Command (ACC), the Wing’s Operations Group sustained a high operations tempo, logging more than 37,000 flying hours, including 1931 operational reconnaissance sorties and 274 National Airborne Operations

Center sorties, without a major mishap.

During the award period, the 55th Operations Support Group Squadron was recognized for managing the most complex flying hour program in ACC.

The Wing also deployed more than 6,000 personnel in support of worldwide contingency operations.

The Wing also earned the ACC Daedalian Maintenance Trophy for 1999 and five Department of Defense honors, plus over 100 ACC awards to various units within the Wing.

All this added up to full recognition that the “Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth” remains the Air Force’s best.

(From an article in the 26 October 2001 *Air Pulse*, the *Offutt AFB newspaper*, written by **MSgt Teresa Kaye**, 55th Wing Public Affairs)

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First things first. But not necessarily in that order.

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BOGEY! THREE O’CLOCK LEVEL!

In the July issue of *Videmus Omnia*, was this picture (below) of the massive Soviet TU-128 Fiddler interceptor, the largest fighter aircraft ever built.

The photo was taken by crew E-18 flying from Eielson on June 29th, 1972 in the Kara Sea, north of the Fiddler’s home base of Amderma.

The menacing AA-5 Ash air-to-air missiles (nearly 11 feet long!) with infrared and radar homing noses are clearly visible.

(Courtesy of Robb Hoover)



We asked for whoever remembered taking the picture to let us know so attribution could be given. Well, now we know who the ‘bogey-man’ is: **Richard “Zot” Barazzotto**. Following is his account:

The stories in the July 2001 55SRWA newsletter brought back a flood of memories. Names and faces, missions and places, all came running through my mind as I read. Then in the back I saw a very familiar picture. It was a close-up of a Soviet TU-128 Fiddler, a picture of which that I have hanging on my wall with the rest of my flying mementos.

Here is the rest of the story:

That picture was taken on the last flight of a deployment of Combat Sent (A/C# 849) which took place during June 1972. It was an interesting month that saw us twice return to Omaha from Eielson when the navigation system crumped.

The first time it happened we had just hit the tanker and were topped off on gas. The command post air-filed our flight plan and we headed south - without car keys, wallets, or our loved ones knowing we were coming home.

Fortunately, we all knew how to break into our own homes, and after that, we always disregarded

the regulations and carried our keys and wallets.

Our whole deployment was filled with problems, and we even had a theme song - Jerry Reid's "When Your Hot, Your Hot, and When Your Not, Your Not." We also used the "I have some good news and some bad news" greeting with regularity.

On one flight we were having a problem of losing oxygen. As the copilot it was my job to monitor that and I had all hands turn off their oxygen regulators as we tried to find the cause. It was a stuck regulator and the off/on trick fixed it, but everyone knew that we had a reduced supply of LOX.

About two hours north of Eielson, the navigation system gave up the ghost with the usual bang and a cloud of smoke that came up from under the cockpit floor.

I turned on the emergency intercom (which overrides what everyone is listening to) and announced, "Crew - this is the copilot. The good news is that we have plenty of oxygen left. The bad news is that we are going to have to use it because we have a fire." Given that two hours north of Eielson is not a place where many would go for a vacation (even in June), that got the crew's attention. They were out of their sleeping bags, fully dressed and wide-awake in record time. Fortunately, the fire was only a puff of smoke, and the return to base and the landing were uneventful.

The nav system quit several other times, once during an engine start. We shut down, announced to the tower that we had a fire on board and abandoned the plane.

By the time the message got to the command post, it had been

garbled to say that the plane was in a hanger and on fire. Needless to say, the base commander was really interested in what was going on. Fortunately, this, too, was only a puff of smoke and no real damage was sustained by the plane or the crew.

Because we were scheduled to fly only a few times a week, we had time to sightsee, and for those of us who had never been to Alaska, it was an adventure.

On one planned three-day break, I secured permission to go to Mt. McKinley National Park and stay over. Several of us took the train from Fairbanks, booked rooms in the park hotel and made plans to take a bus tour early in the morning. Little did I know that after we had departed, someone figured out that the schedule had been messed up and we were really supposed to fly the next day. Oops!

We had a great trip, saw lots of wildlife and relaxed, blissfully unaware of people jumping through hoops trying to figure out how they were going to get the only RC-135U qualified copilot in the state of Alaska back in time to make the flight. They looked at all kinds of options from sending a private plane to using the base rescue helicopters. Finally, someone made a rational decision and just told SAC to change the schedule.

Given all the problems that we were having, SAC HQ was starting to take notice of us. Besides the maintenance problems, the mission had yet to be accomplished. After each mission a crow would disappear as he took the mission tapes back to the lower-States for analysis. He would reappear in a few days and

another crow would disappear after the next flight.

On the day in question I took two cameras with me, the standard issue Pentax with a 200mm lens and my personal Minolta, also with a 200mm lens but with color film. Someone had installed the focusing glass backward so the Pentax didn't focus correctly. For that reason I planned to focus on infinity and then switch cameras if the opportunity should avail itself to take a picture. Little did I know how soon that opportunity would happen.

We were in the operational area doing our thing when I happened to look out my right window. There, flying perfect formation on our wing tip, was a TU-128 Fiddler. In total shock I told the aircraft commander and he slapped my arm and said, "Take a picture!" Duh!! What a great idea! So I grabbed the Pentax and snapped a shot, then switched to the Minolta and took some more. As soon as I grabbed the first camera, the Fiddler pilot decided that he should be gone and rolled right. That is when I snapped the picture (of the aircraft).

As we were debriefing at Eielson, an excited intel guy brought us the first proof. It was the first time that anyone had taken a picture of a TU-128 and it showed with remarkable clarity details that we didn't know - like the antenna arrays (probably for a data link) and the outlines of the wing tanks.

Guess the four years I spent at Rochester Institute of Technology getting a BS in Photographic Science, and all the time playing with cameras actually was useful.

The aircraft commander was **Bob Lyons**, and I remember

Larry Staringer was one of the crows who would disappear to take the tapes south.

After the picture news made it to Offutt, they (*StratReconCenter*) decided that the last mission wasn't going to happen (and) we prepared to head home. I wanted an interesting souvenir so, I headed to the woods and dug up a birch tree. It neatly filled the plane from one emergency exit hatch to the other.

Because of the permafrost, it didn't have a deep root ball. But, as it warmed up, it did have a bunch of Alaska-sized mosquitoes, now looking for dinner in the plane. A little bug spray took care of that problem and it arrived home without further incident.

The tree's trip from the plane to 1608 Madison St. was in the right side of my wife's VW (with the seat out.) It thrived in its new, warmer home and Larry would always greet me asking, "Does a tree grow in Bellevue?"

Fly Safe, *Zot Barazzotto*
Xenia, OH

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Ever notice that the other line moves faster, until you get in it?

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WHAT A SILLY QUESTION!

A view from a military wife

Of course I'm secure. What a silly question! Of course I may return home from this convention and find that we're moving to Okinawa next month. And I may move 20 times in 20 years, but I'm well adjusted. My husband's work schedule changes from day to day, but I'm happy.

I'm well acquainted with loneliness and, yes, a little fear, yet I remain secure. I owe my peace of mind and self-control to my membership in a very exclusive organization.

Our group has no official title, but we are affectionately referred to as "military wives." I am very proud to belong to this organization. It is quite an honor, since every member has to be personally accepted and approved by a "certain" serviceman.

The qualifications differ with each applicant, but we are all expert flag wavers. We band together in this group to learn from each other's experiences, to share each other's hardships, and to try to keep each other sane. In other words: to be secure.

We are very cliquish, I'm afraid. Throw any two of us in the middle of any sized group, and we immediately dominate the conversation with our travel tales, flavoring our vocabulary with such esoteric terms as "TDY", "PCS", and "operational sortie." And we seldom venture from our "ivory" military bases, but prefer the cloistered comfort of our comrades. I admit that these irritating traits merely suggest that we find our total security only in each other's company.

We are trying to attain that certain strong carriage that comes with self-confidence. We spend endless months alone while our husbands are in combat, flying secret missions from some remote base, or attending classes in Honolulu. And we endure the months of separation while in various stages of pregnancy and with any number of children and/or pets.

We sometimes must have babies by ourselves, have miscarriages by ourselves, and even have the Asian flu by ourselves.

We can fertilize a yard, recharge a dead battery, fix a disposal, clean a furnace, fill out an income tax return, and deworm a cat, a dog, or a seven-year-old.

We are trying to attain that countenance of stability that belongs to the nomads. The feeling of putting roots down is entirely foreign to us. Our houses are not our homes, but merely temporary shelters. Our families are our homes.

Although we collect things, and are dismayed because they take up so much space and weight, we also collect memories and friends and find them far more satisfying than tangible trinkets because memories don't tarnish with age and friends can't break.

We're seeking that serenity of faith and trust. I have to learn to accept the fact that most everything my husband does militarily is classified, and I may never share in his work. I can be proud of my husband's medals, but, I may never know what he did to earn them.

We want to have that personal magnetism that belongs to the courageous. We want to be able to grieve over the death or capture of a friend one day and then, without qualm, send our husbands out on a similar mission the next.

I want to be able to say only words of encouragement when I see my husband's face etched in tension as he dons his flight suit, double checks his survival gear, and prepares for another mission; when I'm aware that any

goodbye may be the last.

We're easily spotted at any parade. We stand a little straighter than most when the flag is marched by, and we salute it without embarrassment. That flag means something to us. Its red is the red of our pain; its white, the white of our tears; its blue the blue of our loneliness. We belong to it.

That's why we can remain unshaken when we hear our husbands called "war criminals", "aggressors", "murderers", "torturers of children"; and that's why we can remain steadfast when we hear our country, the country they fight for, called "imperialistic" and "the one big threat to world peace."

Our organization for mental and physical security is not unique. There are myriad groups blanketing our country. The membership is open to any and all who can meet the very demanding qualifications.

First, they must cherish their freedom enough to suffer and sacrifice for it. Second, they must be expert flag wavers. Then, if anyone should ask them, "Are you secure?" they can just shrug their shoulders and say, "Of course I'm secure. What a silly question!"

Molly Strong, (spouse of **Ron**) Offutt AFB, NE, 1968. (*Ed. Note: Although presented in 1968, her words have a timeless application, as we all know.*)

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If ignorance is bliss, why aren't more people happy?

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Whatever hits the fan is **not** equally distributed.

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ASSOCIATION BUSINESS & MEMBERSHIP SOURCES

Business/Policy/Reunion

Suggestions:

President Bill Ernst
410 Greenbriar Court
Bellevue, NE 68005
e-mail: BillErnst@aol.com

Association/Wing History:

Vice President Robb Hoover
13412 Tregaron Circle
Bellevue, NE 68123
e-mail: RobbHoover@aol.com

Membership Dues/Changes of Address:

Treasurer Errol Hoberman
6441 Avenida De Galvez
Navarre, FL 32566
e-mail: sac-ewo@home.com

Newsletter Editor:

Secretary Max Moore
201 Basswood Court
Bellevue, NE 68005-2001
e-mail:

MaxMoore55@aol.com

Association WebPage

Comments/Ideas

Don Griffin
8683 Rawhide Lane, #11
Wilton, CA 95693
e-mail: dgrif@citlink.net (*new*)

TAPS – News of Association members and associates taking the "Big PCS" should be sent to **both** Bill Ernst and Max Moore. Please include next of kin and an address to which the Association condolence card may be sent; date of demise, and any other pertinent information, if known. The news in **TAPS** is limited by what information is given.

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Once you go over the hill, you pick up speed

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DATA RESOURCES

Be advised that Secretary Max Moore has a repository of most of the historical and researched data on the Association, specifically since it was incorporated in 1994.

Also compiled is a list of past reunions, thanks to Sam Pizzo; Board of Directors election results; significant events, accomplishments, projects and donations.

Anyone interested in copies of the history and/or research, please contact Max at the addresses listed in the directory above.

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YOUR 55TH ASSN WEB SITE

www.55srwa.org

The Association homepage continues to garner rave reviews from those who go there. If you have not already done so, you are urged to check out the site.

Webmeister Don Griffin and his creative cyber-sidekick, **Dave Johnson**, maintain the site.

Everything you want to know about the Association is there: **constitution, bylaws**, officers and bios; membership form, library, picture gallery, and e-mail address listing, bulletin board and links to many other sites of interest.

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ASSOCIATION LOGO POLO SHIRTS/HATS

The Association still has a limited number of polo shirts with the dual-shield logo of the Association on them for sale. The logo is on the left breast, no pocket, white with red trim, navy

blue front placket. They are 100% cotton. **Cost is \$22 per shirt.**

Also available at **\$7 each** are royal blue ballcaps with the dual-shield.

Both items are of excellent quality and by consensus, the best looking we have ever had.

Charlie Waters was responsible for ordering the items prior to the Melbourne reunion. **Mike Cook** is now the marketer for the shirts and hats. Anyone desiring to purchase either or both can contact Mike via e-mail at Michael.Cook@offutt.af.mil or mwjcook@attglobal.net. Write him at 3204 Rahn Blvd, Bellevue, NE 68123, or call (402) 293-9092. *(There is a charge of \$3.50 for postage. Checks should be made to the 55th SRW Association.)*



You can't have everything. Where would you put it?



ASSOCIATION TIE

Pursuant to **Sam Pizzo's** proposal at the Melbourne reunion membership meeting last May, the Good Sam researched the project and found designs, type, and cost of the 55th SRW Association's version of a 'regimental tie'. The Board members had input during the process, and voted on and approved the final product.

However, upon further review of samples of the 'final' product, it didn't meet the specs. So, it was back to the drawing board to get a quality item worthy of our organizational taste.

If/when we get a suitable product, it is hoped the ties will be available in time for the reunion in Savannah, GA, next May.



MEMBER AUTHOR BOOK PLUGS

Bruce Bailey's "*As the Crow Flies*"; fictional thriller involving an RB-47 crew in the early sixties. You will recognize some characters from the Forbes days and OL staffs. From Imprint Books, 240 King Street, Charleston, SC 29401. 1-866-308-6235. Or go to BookSurge.com to read an excerpt or to order; paperback \$15, E-book, \$8.

Tom Hanley's "*Flyboys*"; written by the son of an RB-47 navigator. A humorous account of growing up as an "AF brat" around Forbes air patch in the sixties. Go to www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/

James Owen's "*No Time for Pilots*"; a novel from the viewpoint of an EWO from nav training to EWO school, to bombers, Shemya, SAC/HQ and the Pentagon. Pentland Press, Inc., 5122 Bur Oak Circle, Raleigh, NC 27612, (916) 782-0281.

Wolfgang Samuel's "*I Always Wanted to Fly*"; covers his days as a boy during the Berlin airlift and his time in the Air Force as an EWO in Cold War reconnaissance, plus a lot more history. University Press of Mississippi. \$30 hardcover. At your local bookstore, or call 1-800-737-7788.



SEQUEL

The follow-on book to pick up where *We See All* leaves off regarding RC-135 operations, is still a work in progress, but has necessarily taken a lower priority than the planning for the strat recon memorial. More news as it becomes available.



OMAHA CAUCUS

You may have seen the term "Omaha Caucus" referred to in Bill's prezgrams, via e-mail, or heard it used in some manner.

Perhaps it is time to 'splain this so as to deflect any perceptions or misconceptions of how it works.

From time to time, the president calls for a meeting of a group of Offutt/Omaha area Association members, who are interested in the doings of the organization, and want to keep abreast of them and/or be more involved. The setting is always informal.

It is used as a sounding board, just one more avenue, to look at various issues the Association may have in the works. Ideas are floated and discussed, proposals made and discussed, opinions expressed (and boy, are they expressed !)

The Association Award for Excellence, as but one example, was born that way (after a suggestion by Sam Pizzo).

And other gems have come out of those meetings, as well. Once in a while, an idea is shot down and never moves on.

No official action is ever taken by that group. No secrets votes are taken. It is not a cabal.

Usually, at best, a consensus on a given topic comes out of the meetings to go forward to the Board or membership to see if they live or die.

Sometimes it is noted just how varied and strongly opinions on a specific issue can be.

In summary, the Caucus serves a useful purpose between the reunion Board and membership meetings. *Max*