



Videmus Omnia

55th STRAT RECON WING ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER **AUGUST 2002**

THE 55th STRATEGIC RECONNAISSANCE WING MEMORIAL

*****Recap and Status Report*****

In the January edition of the *Videmus Omnia* newsletter, Editor 'Maxamillion' Moore wrote an excellent article concerning the Memorial that I want to review and update to ensure everyone knows how we got to where we are with the project.

As most of you know, the idea of a 55th SRW Memorial Monument first surfaced at the reunion in Melbourne, FL, in May 2001. The idea was discussed and a motion was made and passed to proceed with the initial plan, first by Board of Directors and then during the membership meeting.

The plan called for commissioning a polished black granite monument, similar to that donated to the SAC Museum in 1996, to be placed near the nose of the RB-47H being refurbished for the Cold War Annex of the USAF Museum. It would be dedicated in 2003 at the reunion being planned in Dayton. This would necessitate raising an estimated \$10,000 for the project from the members of the Association. The Board of Directors reasoned that if each of the nearly 1,000 members donated the cost of one year's dues, just

\$10, our goal would easily be reached. This approach was agreed upon unanimously by the Board and the members present at the membership meeting.

The project was launched.

***** Donations Roll In*****

Donations began rolling in immediately after the reunion and were accelerated by the publicity given the project in the post-reunion newsletter of July 2001. By September it became quite clear that we would soon exceed the \$10,000 goal. After talking with Dodds Monuments, a contractor with extensive experience and intimate knowledge of the Museum Memorial Gardens requirements, it became evident that we would not have room on the monument for all the names of the \$50-plus donors, as was suggested in an early proposal. It also became evident Dodds should be the contractor of choice.

Meanwhile, the Museum denied our request for having the monument inside the Cold War Annex by the B-47H, and insisted that it be located in the Memorial Gardens adjacent to the Museum.

In October, the Association president sent a letter to each member of the Association describing in some detail, changes to the memorial plan including the possibility of a brick patio. It was determined that to erect the type of memorial befitting the sacrifices of the 55th SRW Cold

Warriors, a more elaborate memorial should be designed and planned.

All members were requested to get on the bandwagon and support the project. As an incentive, we offered personalized engraved bricks, that would go in the patio surrounding the monument, to individuals who donated \$50 or more. Additionally, members who donated \$100 or more would not only get a personalized brick, but also be credited with three years' dues.

By the end of the year, we had responses from 250 members and the donations **averaged over \$60**. As a result of this overwhelming and gratifying support, we felt sure that we could do far more than we had originally conceived.

****Planning Committee****

We had so many and varied ideas for the Memorial coming in, a planning committee was appointed to work through the suggestions, check them for feasibility and prepare a report recommending a Memorial plan for approval of the Board of Directors. The committee was chaired by Max Moore and consisted of **Robb Hoover, Regis Urschler, Jim Maloney and Mike Cook**, with input from **Jack Kovacs and Bill Ernst**. The committee proposed a truly outstanding plan for a memorial that would properly memorialize all the valiant and under recognized Cold Warriors of the 55th Strat Recon (Group) Wing.

To that end, the monument design grew from just under five feet high to just over eight feet. Into the front of the monument's vertical wing, the following inscriptions will be engraved:

DEDICATED TO THE VALIANT MEMBERS OF
THE 55TH STRATEGIC RECONNAISSANCE WING
WHOSE SELFLESS PATRIOTISM AND
DEVOTION TO DUTY CONTRIBUTED DIRECTLY
TO WINNING THE COLD WAR. THIS
MONUMENT STANDS IN SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO
THOSE WHO PAID THE ULTIMATE PRICE, AND
TO THEIR FAMILIES, WHOSE SACRIFICES
CONTINUE.

5 SEPTEMBER 2003

WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT FREEDOM IS
NEVER REALLY FREE. IT IS THE MOST COSTLY
THING IN THE WORLD. AND FREEDOM IS
NEVER PAID FOR IN A LUMP SUM,
INSTALLMENTS COME DUE IN EVERY

GENERATION. ALL ANY OF US CAN DO IS
OFFER THE GENERATIONS THAT FOLLOW
A CHANCE FOR FREEDOM.

Above the dedication, high and to the right, the SAC shield will be etched. Below the SAC Shield and to the left, will be the 55th SRW shield. Engraved into the front of the base, will be the names of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Honor Roll; those who made the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives to preserve the freedom and liberty that we hold so dear.

(The list was compiled by the diligent research of Robb Hoover, using many sources and cross-checked several times. Every attempt was made to ensure the list is accurate and complete.)

On the back of the vertical wing will be etched the five different aircraft representative of those flown by the 55th SRW during the Cold War: the B-17, RB-29, RB-50, RB-47 and RC-135.



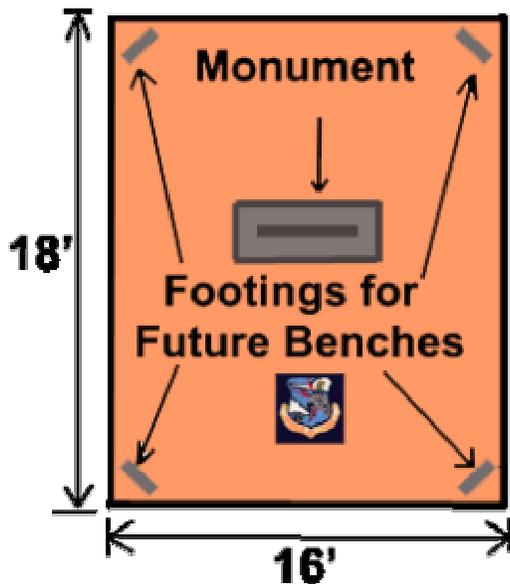
Front

Back

****Monument Setting****

The monument will be centered in a 16ft x 18ft paver-brick patio. The patio, including the personalized bricks, will surround the monument and darker bricks will frame the patio. There will be a 24in x 24in black granite tile, with the SAC crest engraved, centered five feet in front of the Monument. This is Phase 1 of the memorial, and will be completed this year.

(Note: Pictures of the monument's design and the memorial layout can be viewed at the Association's web page at 55srwa.org)



Phase 2 of the plan will take place next year and will be completed prior to the September 3-6, 2003 Recon Rendezvous reunion and memorial dedication. It will include the addition of four granite benches, one for each operational squadron (38th, 338th and 343rd) and one for **all** the support organizations (OMS, AMS, FMS, HHQ, etc.). The benches will be located in each corner of the patio. Regis Urschler has volunteered to chair a committee to design the benches and raise the funds for this effort (approx. \$14,000).

Personalized bricks that are ordered between 15 June 2002 and 15 July 2003 will be engraved on-site next year prior to the reunion. We also want to plant spruce trees as a backdrop to the monument, if we have sufficient funds and, if approved by the USAF Museum.

****Reconnaissance Park****

We also proposed to the Museum Director that he designate the area immediately adjacent to our location as a "Recon Park", an area on the south side of the Memorial Gardens where Cold War reconnaissance memorials/monuments could be located, all within close proximity. This concept was approved and the desired area set aside for us.

Thus far, The Big Safari Association, The Freedom Through Vigilance Association (the former Security Service alumni association) and the 55thSRW memorials will be located in the area. The Dragon Lady (U-2), Blackbird (SR-71) and the 100th Strat Recon Wing Associations have been contacted and encouraged to commission and locate memorials/monuments in the "park".

In April 2002 Dodds Monuments advised us that by 1 June we needed to provide a matrix of the

personalized bricks, and data that is to be engraved, that we want to be completed this year. This was communicated to the membership by letter. It was explained that the deadline was established to ensure that all bricks ordered by 1 June could be engraved in the factory and laid with the patio this summer. We also wanted to include as many of the personalized engraved bricks as possible this year at the lower cost.

Also explained was that bricks could still be ordered after 1 June, but they would not be engraved until next year, and the engraving would have to be done on-site. Because on-site engraving is more expensive, the donation required for personalized bricks had to be raised, commensurate with that increased cost, to \$65 effective 1 June 2002.

****Grand Plan Approved****

In early May 2002, the Museum staff approved our very thorough and specific proposal, put together by Jack Kovacs. The approval authority stated that they had **not** seen a more detailed and complete request, and that we had carefully thought out and itemized every aspect of the memorial. Once again, a tribute to the hard work, dedication and great pride in this project exhibited by Jack Kovacs and the planning committee.

After the final brick orders were checked for errors and sent back for corrections, ground breaking began in early August. The site preparation includes laying out the patio and pouring the footings on which the monument and four benches will rest. Jack will do a final review of the corrected data on the brick templates, and then the brick engraving will begin.

The dedication inscriptions will be etched in the front of the vertical wing. The aircraft artwork design was approved for the backside of the vertical wing, and the pains-taking detail of this work has been completed, and it is awesome!

****55th SRW Honor Roll****

The base of the monument, upon which the names of the Honor Roll will be engraved, is in place at Dodds, and we had finalized the list of names to Jack and Dodds in mid-July. Jack will do the final review of names and then Dodds will engrave them on the monument base.

Once this is done, the two upper portions should be finished, and the monument will be ready for installation.

This year's construction (Phase 1) should be completed by the end of October at a cost of \$24,975. By holding the cost below \$25,000 this year, the memorial approval remained at the USAF Museum level vice having to send it up through AF channels for approval. Additional costs that will be paid for after Phase 2 is completed, are the one-time maintenance costs to the Museum (10% of the total cost), and (if required) the 6% taxes to the State of Ohio.

****It's Not Too Late****

If you haven't given to the Memorial yet and want to be a part of this historic contribution to our heritage, send your donations, in what ever amount, payable to the 55th SRW Memorial and mail to **Treasurer Errol Hoberman** at 6441 Avenida De Galvez, Navarre, FL, 32566. **All donations are tax deductible.**

A \$100 contribution still gets you a personalized brick and credit for three years dues. If you just want to order a personalized brick, send your donation of \$65, plus the information you want on engraved your brick, to Bill Ernst, 410 Greenbriar Ct., Bellevue, NE, 68005.

Remember that the data on the brick is limited to three lines with 13 characters per line, which includes spaces, commas, periods, ampersands and dashes. That's not much space, so use it judiciously. We are using standard military abbreviations for rank with few exceptions, such as LTC for LtCol.

That's pretty much where we are and how we arrived there.

I want to thank the over 550 members who have thus far provided their overwhelming financial support, and especially the family of MSgt (Ret) Stefan E. Antel, who donated over \$1100. (And to Bob Gmitter who came out of years of deep cover to donate \$500.) I also want to thank all those who have had a hand in the planning and implementing this terrific project. You can be justifiably very proud of the fruits of your labor.

I will provide another update in the next newsletter after the first of the year.

Videmus Omnia, Bill Ernst

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The Omaha World-Herald had a very nice article about the memorial on 27 May 2002 as a result of an interview with Ernst; and the Air

Pulse, the Offutt base paper, had one in the 7 June issue after an interview with Moore.

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SAC 2002 REUNION SAVANNAH, GA

The gathering of Strategic Air Command veterans at the 2002 reunion, held May 16-18 at The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, located in Pooler, GA, just outside Savannah, was a resounding success!

Approximately 320 attended the Saturday night banquet with former CINSAC, General Russell E. Dougherty, as the guest speaker. The banquet was the reunion finale, and celebrated the sixth anniversary of the museum, and the expansion of its theme from Eighth Air Force in Europe during WWII to the inclusion of the Strategic Air Command in the Cold War. A highlight, of course, was the participation of the Cold Warriors of SAC in all the reunion festivities.

Events began with Thursday morning's golf at the Crosswinds Golf Course just north of the museum. It should be called "downwind" because it is just north of the eastward final approach of Savannah International Airport. In addition to airline and Northrop Grumman Corporation aircraft traffic in the area, the golfers were treated to F-16s, Harriers, Georgia AFRES C-130s, and two B-1s arriving for an exercise at the local gunnery range. (*As one hacker observed, "We went to play golf and an air show broke out."*) Of course, the reunion planners took full credit for staging that exhibition.

Many who did not play golf went on tours of Savannah that day, and throughout the rest of the week. They enjoyed the many elegant sights, fine dining and other ambiance that hospitable, historic southern city offers.

Co-sponsors for the SAC reunion were the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum and the Birthplace Chapter of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Historical Society. It is difficult to find the words that adequately express the super efforts of these two groups. The staff was experienced in putting on events, but not in the initial planning and notification aspects. From the very beginning, they were totally committed to the success of the

reunion, as were the members of the local 8AF chapter.

Two new museum projects were dedicated during the reunion. The Birthplace Chapter completed the restoration of a B-47 on the Monday before, and the museum completed the construction of a replica English chapel on the day of our arrival. The B-47 is an eye-grabber as you cruise on I-95 just north of Savannah. Just a few yards away is the Chapel of the Fallen Eagles, displaying the stone and stained glass so common in English chapels. Both are nestled adjacent to the museum's Memorial Garden, which is filled with monuments and other dedications to crews and units of the Mighty Eighth.

On Friday morning a memorial service was held to honor those SAC members who have passed on. At the conclusion of the service, Reg Urschler made a flyby in his P-51, *Gunfighter II*, on his way to his next air show. His commitment was typical of the 55 SRW Association.

(Of the 362 who registered to attend some or all the reunion activities, 134 were members and guests of the 55th SRW Association having their own "mini-reunion".)

The reunion organizers, **Buck Shuler**, **Tommy Harrison**, and **Jim McCoy**, at a luncheon on Friday, provided information and discussed plans for future reunions. Buck covered the status and plans for the Mighty Eighth Museum, and Jim gave an update on the Strategic Air and Space Museum near Omaha, NE. Tommy recounted how this reunion came about, and led a discussion on future reunions and the possibilities of a controlling organization. Currently, there is no formal organization to plan and govern future SAC reunions.

McCoy then told of the SAC Veterans Advisory Council which was formed to work with the Strategic Air and Space Museum. It includes in its charter the tasking to help develop future reunions and to the perpetuation of the history of SAC. At present, the museum leadership feels it does have sufficient staff to support the planning and notification of reunions.

The museum newsletter, *Wings*, did report on the initial planning for this reunion, as well as updates including the registration form. This was of significant assistance in getting the information to most former Society of SAC members.

Discussion was held on possible sites for future reunions. Hal Austin, representing the March AFB Museum, offered to host the 2004 reunion, possibly in mid-January. Efforts are also being made to work with folks from the Barksdale area for 2006. The attendees decided not to establish a reunion organization at this time, but to leave the planning for future reunions in an informal structure.

A special thanks is expressed to the leaders of the former SAC society and its local Omaha chapter. Upon closing their respective organizations, both groups provided funds to the reunion committee. Without these funds the reunion planners would have been hard pressed to get the word out. Additionally, a special thanks goes to the many organizations that picked up the initial planning information and the registration forms and passed them on through newsletters to their memberships.

As a final note, a word about the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum. You should definitely put it on your list of places to visit. It is unlike most museums, which show equipment and the occasional story. It attempts to do the opposite by using a historical narrative. Its research library is exceptional. They have information on virtually all crewmembers who served in the 8AF in WWII, as well as many others. Check out their web site at www.mightyeighth.org. *Tommy Harrison*



**55th STRAT RECON WING
ASSOCIATION
MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES
18 May 2002 – Pooler, GA, SAC 2002 Reunion**

President Bill Ernst called the meeting to order at 0900. A quorum was present.

He welcomed the members to the reunion, and explained that contrary to the membership wishes in 2001 to have our own hospitality suite at this event, there was no Association point man in place and the logistics of having it were not conducive. He recognized member Tommy Harrison, the SAC Reunion chairman, for a fine job, and that the arrangements worked out well.

Secretary Max Moore read the minutes from the Melbourne, FL, reunion membership meeting

of 19 May 2001. A motion to accept the minutes as read was made, seconded and passed.

Treasurer Errol Hoberman pronounced the Association as "solvent". The total intake for the past year was \$40,000 of which over \$36,000 was for the memorial fund (rounded figures). Membership is up to 989 in good standing to include widows and gratis 55th Wing senior staff.

Don Griffin announced that, at the request of the treasurer, he and **Jim Taylor** had audited the Association books and found all in order.

President Ernst reported on the memorial status. The USAF Museum director and staff approved the overall concept and design of the monument, patio layout and proposed 'recon park' idea. The cost for the initial phase in 2002 will be \$24,795. He also gave an update on the restoration progress of RB-47H, #4299.

Vice President Hoover reported on the research to finalize the list of those killed in the line duty whose names will appear on the monument base as the 55th SRW Honor Roll. He stressed the need for accuracy and inclusiveness.

Ernst detailed the personalized brick donor situation. After 1 June the cost to secure a personalized brick would go to \$65 per since bricks made after the initial phase will have to be done on-site by the contractor, and that is more labor intensive.

Hoover will be the custodian of the reunion photo albums until such time as volunteers are named to update and maintain them. It has been suggested that a group of widows may take the project.

Ernst announced that **LtCol Kermit Neal** has been named to the Board as the active duty officer representative from the 55th Wing taking the vacancy left by **Col Scott Merrow's** PCS last summer. **MSgt Steve Hagggett** will be going PCS in June and his replacement will be sought.

Webmaster Don Griffin stated that he is seeking more members' input for the Assn web site in the way of articles and pictures.

Ben White reported on the Ton San Nhut veterans' organization. Anyone interested in information on the organization should contact him.

President Ernst announced he had appointed **Sam Pizzo** to chair the nomination committee to prepare a slate for the next election of the Board of Directors in September 2003.

Ernst commented on the plans for the next full reunion for the Association at the Recon Rendezvous in Dayton, OH, for September 2003. Ernst praised Jack Kovacs for the superb job he has done in working the memorial project, organizing the reunion and in keeping everyone informed on the restoration status of the RB-47H. The membership owes him a great deal of gratitude for his dedication and hard work.

Looking to the spring of 2005, a chairman for San Diego will be sought.

Harrison stated that the SAC heritage organization will be planning reunions at Barksdale AFB area in 2006 and March AFB area in 2004.

Meeting was adjourned at 0945.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings from the Midlands,

Seldom in life does one get a chance to do something as meaningful and enduring as that in which we are currently engaged. After a year's planning and coordinating, the grand 55th Strat Recon Wing Cold War Memorial is coming to fruition. This has only been possible with the generous donations from the gallant members of the 'Fightin' Fifty-Fifth' Association, their loyal families, and the personal dedicated oversight of Jack Kovacs.

Your support has been overwhelming and I think the Memorial will exceed your every expectation. There is a substantive article earlier in this newsletter that details the history and progress of the Memorial.

This morning (*July 20*) a number of **Fritz Hyde's** close friends gathered to once again remember our ever smiling, witty, dedicated comrade-in-arms and golf buddy. This time it was on the 12th hole at Willow Lakes Golf Course, at Offutt AFB.

Fritz loved and challenged the course with renewed vigor every time he went out. But it seemed like he just couldn't get by the 12th hole without sending his drive into the lake. So this time, it was beside a tree that several of his closest friends planted his memory, on the general flight trajectory that his ball usually took.

Fritz's passing earlier this year, and the gathering this morning, again reminded me how very lucky we are that still have our health. Seeing old friends at the Savannah mini-reunion in May was wonderful, but it was missing something. It was missing the couple who went to all the reunions, and it was the first reunion that I can remember that Fritz and **Marty** were not present for duty. We shall miss him.

And we will miss **John Marks** and his wonderful Cajun jokes, as well as **Rose Morss**, and all the other good friends and compatriots that we have lost this year. Far too many in my view.

If you haven't taken the time to order your personalized brick for the Memorial patio yet, we are still taking orders. The price has gone to \$65 only because the bricks will have to be engraved on-site and that costs more. Order today to ensure that it will be there when you come to Dayton next year for the Memorial dedication at the 2003 Recon Rendezvous Reunion, 3 through 6 September.

Take care of yourselves, stay healthy and the good Lord willin', we'll see you in Dayton.

Videmus Omnia, Bill



BGEN POWER SAYS FAREWELL

55th SRW Association Warriors:

It is with sadness I depart Offutt in August as my time of command comes to a close. Before I depart, I wanted to thank you all for your unprecedented loyalty in keeping alive the memories of the past, and building on them to visualize a bright future for the successor to the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, the Fightin' Fifty-Fifth Wing.

The Wing mission has evolved and changed in some aspects over time, but one thing remains: patriotic active duty, retired and prior 55th members supporting the Wing and insuring successful mission accomplishment. We couldn't have been as successful as we've been without the SRW's support, encouragement and helpful suggestions to make things better. Our organization is truly blessed to have warriors like you who bring so much vitality to every event.

As time goes on, and new warriors join us, let us reinforce to them the secrets of success the SRW

discovered years ago: that dedication and energy DO matter and DO make a difference.

Thank you for letting me serve with this awesome team. I won't forget the lessons I've learned and intend to stay in touch, especially as the 55th moves to the Mighty Eighth Air Force on 1 October this year.

Until then, Godspeed and Fly Safe!

Videmus Omnia,

Greg Power, BGen, USAF

Commander, 55th Wing

23 July 2002

(BGen Power leaves the 55th to be vice commander of Eighth Air Force at Barksdale.)



55th WING GETS NEW COMMANDER

Brigadier General **Timothy C. Jones** assumes command of the 55th Wing from BGen Gregory Power in the latter part of August. He is leaving an assignment as deputy director of programs, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs, HQ US Air Force, Washington, DC.

A 1977 graduate of the US Air Force Academy, he has previously commanded the 92nd Air Refueling Wing at Fairchild AFB, WA, and the 60th Air Expeditionary Wing during the air war over Serbia.

He received a Master of Science degree in systems management at the University of Southern California, and attended the US Marine Corps. Command and Staff College at Quantico, VA, and the Royal College of Defense Studies in London, England, UK.

His assignments include B-52s at Loring AFB, ME, and FB-111A instructor and flight commander at Pease AFB, NH; and at NATO's combined Air Operations center in Vicenza, Italy. He is a command pilot with over 3200 flying hours.

The 55th SRW Association welcomes the general to his new post at Offutt and hopes it can establish the same close rapport its membership has enjoyed with past 55th Wing commanders.



"RECON RENDEZVOUS 2003"

DAYTON, OH

At the USAF Museum

The 55th SRW Association's next reunion will be in Dayton, OH, during the week **after** Labor Day, **3-6 September 2003**. This reunion is to be part of the opening celebration of the **Cold War Annex** to the US Air Force Museum near Wright-Patterson AFB, OH.

The **centerpiece** of the exhibit will be an RB-47H, tail number 4299, which flew operational strategic reconnaissance missions for the 55th SRW at Forbes AFB, KS, in the 1950s and 1960s. Restoration of the ol' bird started in 1999 and continues to the present.



"The queen" shines again.

Jack Kovacs remains our man in place in Fairborn (just east of Dayton), and he has been formulating and coordinating reunion plans for the last two years. He keeps the Board updated on the status of the restoration process, and he is in frequent contact with **MGen (Ret) Charles Metcalf**, US Air Force Museum Director, and the Museum Special Events and Restoration staffs.

****Status of RB-47H 4299****

Work continues to be on schedule with a target completion date in October 2002, about the time the new annex to the USAF Museum (AFM) is to be finished.

Once the contractor declares the building ready for displays, the Museum will have about two weeks to move and position the largest airplanes in the new building before the contractor puts the end of the building up. After that time only "smaller" aircraft, which can fit through the end door, will be moved into the building. This is a major undertaking as some 250 of the total 300 aircraft throughout the AFM will be repositioned during this move.

Restoration progress photos of 4299 have been periodically posted to the 55thSRWA web site since the project started. Significant accomplishments this year were the attaching of the wings to the fuselage in March, requiring an all day effort. The next day the wheels were installed on both landing gear. Subsequent to that, during the next several months, the engine nacelles and outrigger gear were mounted on the wings. In late June the horizontal and vertical stabilizers were put in place followed by the attachment of the canopy.

Once the wheels were on, and the wings attached, with the outrigger gear maintaining balance, more structural restoration actions were taken in the fuselage-belly area behind the EWO compartment. There was a lot of corrosion and, without the tires on, the fuselage sat too low for anyone to work under it comfortably for any period of time.

Since the last newsletter, the "yoke caps" from two generous donors were installed, and the cockpit was finished, almost looking like it just came out of the factory. There's even an original hot cup plugged in, and a real sextant hanging in the navigator's sextant port.



"Look, ma. No hands!"

(Copilot must have the yoke. Look out, world!)

The belly radome was installed, and the discovery that the aft piece of it was missing caused some concern in the Restoration Division. Current plans are to fabricate it as close as they can without measurements or good pictures. Apparently, this was missing at Salina, KS, where 4299 moldered away while on static display and neglected for several years.

****Memorabilia Donations Sought****

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, kneepads 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. **All donations are tax deductible.**

Contact the USAF Museum Collections Division, who can help in the process; or Jack Kovacs at 564 Sartell Dr, Fairborn, OH 45324-5745; Phone: (937) 879-1390 (*no calls after 9 pm eastern time, please*); or e-mail: j1a2c3k4@aol.com.

**** Recon Rendezvous 2003 Progress ****

Preparations continue for the reunion, which is scheduled for **3-6 September 2003**. This gathering will involve not only the **55th SRW Association**, but also other USAF Cold War reconnaissance-involved organizations. It could be one of the largest events for this area, with estimates of up to 800 people attending. The USAF Museum is co-sponsoring the event with our Association.

For those who have never visited the AFM, it has one of the best and largest collections of aircraft (300+) in the world. **And admission is free!** One can spend a day or more touring exhibits, inside and out, and the Memorial Gardens.

Wright Patterson AFB is the home of Air Material Command Headquarters (the former Air Force Logistics Command-AFLC), as well as Aeronautical Systems Command Headquarters. It is the USAF's research and development center, and the location of the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT). It is also the home base of a USAF Reserve C-141 (soon, C-5) organization.

The primary contracted hotel is the Holiday Inn, I-675, Fairborn, OH, and we are working on arrangements for overflow with nearby hotels. Since the primary hotel will only hold about half of the expected attendees, you might consider making your reservations well in advance (anytime after 15 Sept 2002).

Call the Holiday Inn I-675 Conference Center, Dayton/Fairborn at 937-426-7800, or fax 937-426-1284, and state that this is a reservation for the "Recon Rendezvous 2003" in order to receive the special rate of \$89 per night. The key thing to remember is that other units have been invited to join us for this event, so we anticipate filling up the Holiday Inn early. Let's get as many 55th'ers in this hotel as we can!

To cater to the anticipated overflow of participants, we are negotiating with other nearby motels such as the following: 1. Fairfield Inn, 2. Hampton Inn, 3. Homewood Suites, 4. Marriott (under construction), 5. Ramada Express (new this year), and 6. the Hope Hotel and Conference Center (already negotiated at \$75 a night), which is a contract hotel on base about 6 minutes away.

Watch the 55th SRWA web site for more info (rates) on these other hotels. #1, 2, 3 are across the parking lot from the Holiday Inn; #4 is about five minutes away, #5 is about 3 minutes away.

**** Planned Events ****

The AFM **has approved** our use of the USAF Museum facilities for the Saturday symposium (Museum theater has 500 seats); and two dining events (Friday night's informal barbecue, and the Saturday night coat and tie banquet). Both will be memorable social and dining experiences situated among the historic aircraft displays in the AFM.

And of course, the dedication of 55th SRW Memorial Monument in the Memorial Gardens will be a significant event. A once in a life time ceremony, it promises to be an emotional and moving occasion.

The restored RB-47H will be on display and will be opened for a period of time for our people (not open to the public) to climb up into the cockpit and look around for old time's sake.



Navigator's station in the nose. Restoration could not find a ten-inch radarscope, so they likely got this one from a tanker.

Other events planned and being worked are a golf outing at the Wright-Patterson AFB course, and some shopping tours to entertain those who do not golf, and do not attend the symposium.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

As of 1 July 2002, the Association had 956 members in good standing, 146 of which are widows and 38 associated members. This is a decrease of 18 members since 31 December 2001.

Trivia item – The Association has members in **all 50 states**, DC, Guam, Puerto Rico and APO Europe. We even have reps in North Dakota and Alaska (*Bobby Bates, welcome back*).

* * * * *

The four-digit year your dues expire(d) can be found in the upper right hand corner of the mailing label for this newsletter. (*You discarded the envelop already, didn't you, hmmm? Well, go look for it. It's in the trash.*)

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

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

(Note: if your dues expired in 2000 or 2001, 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. 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 pins, as well, so members in their area can get the pins from them for \$3.00 without the S/H.

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55th WING BIRTHDAY BALL

The 55th Wing held its 24th annual Birthday Ball Saturday, February 23, 2002 at the Holiday Inn Central in Omaha. The gala event was attended by the active duty wing members, community leaders and retirees. Nearly 80 Association members and guests, including President Ernst, VP Hoover, Secretary Moore, Board members **Mike Cook, Bob Krist, Jim Maloney** and **MSgt Steve Haggett** and their wives, represented the 55th SRW Association. Several members from out of town were there for

Please note, for those who may want to extend their stay before or after the reunion, that 2003 is the 100th anniversary of the Wright Brothers flight (Dayton is their home town), as well as the bicentennial of the State of Ohio. There will be many events going on in Dayton, and at the Museum all year long. Contact the Dayton Chamber of Commerce and/or the USAF Museum for specific schedules around the reunion time frame. (Also note that in the time period of the opening of the new building and moving of the aircraft in late 2002, some displays may not be available due to those operations. Anyone planning to visit the AFM during late fall 2002, and wanting to see something specific, should contact the AFM to determine if it will be available.)

More on the reunion activities will be posted on the Association web site as details develop. The next issue of the *Videmus Omnia* will be devoted primarily to the Recon Rendezvous 2003 details: registration and activities costs, schedules, complete with forms. Publication should be anticipated in March/April 2003.

But, don't wait for that. Mark your calendars now and start making plans for what promises to be an emotional and memorable few days of "monumental" happenings. If you only attend one 55th SRW reunion in your lifetime, THIS IS THE ONE.

Substantive basic article by Jack Kovacs, edited by Max Moore

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TREASURER'S REPORT

The Association, as of 1 July 2002, had a checking account balance of \$18,839.72, \$12,000 of which belongs to the monument fund, leaving \$6839.72. Another \$5,577.28 is invested in an Association funds CD.

We have collected \$36,000 for the monument and bricks. Dodds Monument has been paid \$10,000 toward the memorial construction. \$10,000 of the monument fund is in a CD, which will remain invested until more bills come due.

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the occasion of inducting the crewmen from **Major Willard Palm's** crew into the Wing Hall of Fame.

The Ball celebrated the 61st anniversary of the organization from its roots in the activation of the 55th Pursuit Group at Hamilton Field, CA, in January 1941. Then its heritage through the 55th Reconnaissance Group, which stood up at MacDill Field, FL, in Strategic Air Command in February 1947; the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing from 1950 to 1992, at Barksdale AFB, LA, Ramey AFB, PR, Forbes AFB, KS, and Offutt AFB, NE, and up to the present.

The Ball was originated by then-Colonel (now, retired BGen) Regis F. A. Urschler, commander of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing in January 1979. His idea was to connect the wing's roots and heritage to the active duty personnel and missions. That tradition continues today.

This theme was "Global Connection – Force Protection". The intent was to recognize the Wing's varied missions and the vital role they play in our nation's, and that of the free world's, defense.

Colonel John McLean, 55th Wing Vice Commander, hosted this year's event. The program included the State of the Wing review; induction of new members into the 55th Wing Hall of Fame; presentation of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association Award of Excellence; and the traditional cutting of the birthday cake by the eldest ranking member in attendance, MGen (Ret) **Ed Giller**, Colonel McLean, and the youngest member of the Wing. The Nightwing group of the ACC Heartland of America Band performed.

Hall of Fame

A composite induction to the Wing Hall of Fame recognized the ultimate sacrifice for country by **Major Will Palm, Major Eugene Posa, Captain Dean Phillips and Captain Oscar Goforth**, who were lost on 1 July 1960 when their RB-47 was shot down in an unprovoked attack by a Soviet MiG over international waters. Members of the families who attended the Ball were: **Michelle Palm Emery**, Willard's daughter; Phillips' widow and daughter, **Patricia and Roxanne**; and **Marie Goforth McAtee**, Oscar's widow. Col (Ret) **Bruce Olmstead**, the crew's co-pilot, represented the Posa family. LtCol (Ret) **James Taylor**, an RC-135 EWO, who served in

the 55th SRW/343rd SRS circa 1980s was also inducted.

Association Award of Excellence

President Ernst announced the winners of the **55SRW Association Award of Excellence** for 2001 were **MSgt Steve and MSgt Lisa Haggett**. This outstanding and dynamic duo was recognized for their superior professionalism, significant contributions to the 55th Wing and for their unselfish commitment to worthy community causes.

The Association also donated an engraved saber to be used for the ceremonial occasions. Secretary Moore made the presentation (*without actually falling on the thing*) just prior to the cake cutting on behalf of the entire Association membership, concluding with a rousing, "Happy Birthday, Fightin' Fifty-Fifth, and God Bless America!"

The Ball planning committee was lead by **Major Scott Meeker**, and **2Lt Amy Mathias**, of the 55th Communications Group. Ernst and Moore represented the Association as advisors to the committee, and the membership donated \$1000 to assist in the Ball's financing, plus another \$500 toward portraits which were given to the Palm crew family members.

Tales of the 55th

On Friday, the 22nd of February, the evening preceding the Ball, "*Tales of the 55th*" program began with a social hour, and then veterans of the 55th's history related personal experiences. About 180 persons, including those in town to attend the Ball, were at the party. Many more were active duty troops were there including several members of the Wing's senior staff.

"Pop" Kaden told of his pioneer recon experience with an RB-50 over-flight of Franz Josef Island in 1952, flown round-robin out of Thule AB in Greenland, and the challenges of those early days. Bruce Olmstead narrated the ordeal of the shoot down of Palm's crew, of which he was the copilot, and the ensuing captivity survived by him and **John McKone**, the navigator, of seven months in Lubyanka Prison. **LtCol Will Hampton** of the 343rdRS represented the current 55th Wing operations and spoke about the wing's efforts in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan.

“Pop” Kaden and Robb Hoover using chart of the Franz Josef Island area for visual aid.



This was the second year for this event and it is already an established tradition to enhance the Birthday Ball weekend. It is cosponsored by the Association and the Strategic Roost of the Association of Old Crows, and once again superbly orchestrated by Hoover.

The 2003 Birthday Ball will be held on 1 February at Harrah’s Hotel in Council Bluffs, IA. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend! It’s worth the trip!

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**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 an 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 have their names inscribed on the base of the trophy and are presented with a smaller plaque.

The award winners are announced at the annual 55th Wing Birthday Ball and at 55thSRWA reunions.

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

- a. The Wing nominee for any Department of Air Force award.
- b. A winner of any Wing annual award.
- c. Or nominated 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).

Mike Cook chairs the selection committee. It will meet this fall to choose the honoree(s) for calendar year 2002.

The previous award winners were **LtCol Ricky McMahon**, 338th Combat Training Squadron commander, 2002; and MSgt Steven and MSgt Lisa Haggett for 2001.

The presentations at the past two Birthday Balls were so well received that this award is already recognized as prestigious among the active duty troops.

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T A P S



Hank Barrows; died 11 Feb 2002; Washington, DC; companion, **Suzanne**. Hank was B-52 EWO who was shot down over North Vietnam during Linebacker II in Dec 72. Captured and held as a POW, he was released in Mar 73. He came to the 343rd at Offutt in 1974 as an RC-135 EWO.

Mrs. Otto Bobo; date unknown; Escondido, CA; widow of **Otto**, a long time EWO with the 55th at Forbes.

Joe Church; 28 May 2002; Indiatlantic, FL; companion, **Shirley**. Joe was pilot with a long career in the AF. He was a past vice commander,

then commander of the 55th SRW from 23 July 74 to 4 Mar76.

John Cunningham; 1 Feb 2002; Lakeway, TX; wife **Sally**. He had a long AF career as a pilot-served as tanker and receiver IP at Castle AFB, CA; flew RC-135s with the 24th Strat Wing at Eielson, and was with CEVG at Barksdale. Served in the 55th in staff positions in late '70s.

Hattie Hailey; 21 June 2002; Ft. Worth, TX; wife of **James (Jim)**. Jim served at Offutt as an EC/RC-135 AC/IP who flew Looking Glass airborne command and control missions, then moved into the 38SRS.

Ed Halpin; 27 April 2002; Oklahoma City, OK; pilot who flew B-24s in WW II including the Ploesti, Romania raids. His plane was one of just 30 to survive of 165 sent over the oil field targets. Flew RB-50s with the 55th.

Dottie Howard; 7 Oct 2001; Santa Fe, NM; widow of **Rodger**, former fighter pilot, who flew RB29/50s in with 55th at Ramey, then RB-47s at Forbes. Rose in ops and staff positions to be vice commander of the 55thSRW.

Fritz C. Hyde III; 3 Feb 2002; Bellevue, NE; wife, **Marty**. Fritz had a long career as a SAC EWO in B-52s, then RC-135s with the 82SRS at Kadena and 343SRS at Offutt. He held staff positions at Mildenhall and again in the 55th at Offutt.

John Marks; 19 Feb 2002; Niceville, FL; wife, **Julene**. John began his career as a 2Lt EWO in the 55thSRW and eventually rose to the rank of major general. He remained a friend of the wing and supporter of recon throughout his career

Hurbert D. Mattson; 20 July 2001; wife, **Carol**. RB-47 EWO at Forbes. (*See Letters*)

Rose Morss; 24 May 2002; Tidewater, OR; wife of **Marvin "Bud"**, former sqd. CC of 82SRS at Kadena; DCO, VC and commander of the 55th at Offutt from 30 Jun 71-31 Aug 72.

Dorothy E. Poe; 26 April 2000; Kihie, Maui, HI; widow of **John E**.

James (Jim) D. Stamm; 31 May 2002; Papillion, NE; wife, **Ethel**. Jim was an EWO who was the chief of the intelligence office in the 55th SRW in the early 80s. After retiring from the AF, he served as an agent for the Defense Security Service.

Craig K. Winter; 13 May 2002; RB-29/50 navigator with 343SRS at Barksdale and Ramey in early '50s.

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LETTERS AND STUFF

1 July 02

Dear Colonel Ernst,

Over the years, the 55th Wing's annual Birthday Ball has become quite an honored tradition, and I believe this year's Ball continued that tradition in superb fashion. To this day, I still hear compliments on the Ball's success from active duty and retired military personnel, as well as those from the civilian community.

Please accept my most sincere appreciation for the presentation you made to the Wing on behalf of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association.

We are especially honored by the donation of the ceremonial sword, and we will use it proudly each year at the Birthday Ball to represent the link between our organizations. The presentation added just the right historical touch to our celebration of the Wing's proud heritage.

Thanks again for your continued support of the 55th Wing and our Birthday Ball.

Very Respectfully,

Gregory H Power, BGen, USAF
Commander, 55th Wing

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Hi, Max:

Thank you for putting **Molly's** article in the 55th newsletter ("*What a Silly Question*", Jan 02). Every time I read it I'm even more proud of my wonderful, faithful wife.

A small request for a future issue, please: While I was at Shemya from Sep 66-Apr 67, I took a lot of 8mm movies of the place: two full 8" reels.

They included (*scenes around*) Shemya; the Lisa Ann crew, (two of whom are now deceased); and various airplanes: -135E, -135S, EB-47 Tell Two, etc.

In the late '70s I loaned the film to someone who was (maybe) going to Shemya as an ops officer (had to be a pilot or EWO). Whoever borrowed the reels never returned them.

Now, I'm trying to write some memoirs of Lisa Ann/Rivet Amber for my sons and grandchildren. Needless to say, I REALLY would like to get them back, memoirs or no.

Could you please put a bit in the newsletter as a heartfelt plea for the reels' return?

Thanks so much, **Ron Strong**,
1219 Fairfax, Bellevue, NE 68005-3124
(From an e-mail 02/11/02.)

No, Ron, I can't. Sorry, Max.

Now, will the dirty rat who latched onto Ron's movies (and we know you are out there) PLEASE return them to him in an unmarked package? COD even. No questions asked. No apology needed.

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Errol:

My husband, **Major Hubert D. Mattson** died July 20, 2001 after a one-year battle with prostate cancer. He was 71. This past April we buried him in Arlington (*National Cemetery*), with full military honors. The service was deeply moving and performed with outstanding professionalism. The 62 Air Force men involved made it even more meaningful. It made us all proud to have been a part of the Air Force family.

He never told me his wishes as to where he wanted to be buried, so it was left up to me to make the decision to have him interned in such a beautiful and honorable place. Our three grandchildren (4, 9 and 11) will never forget that day. They loved him dearly.

An old AF friend called me the other day and gave me the 55th web site address. After 28 years of retirement and living in the north woods of Wisconsin, we had lost contact with many of our former AF friends. We never joined the 55th SRW Association, and except for a few friends who are members, we lost touch with many of our group.

Bert was an EWO. He attended school at Keesler AFB in 1959. From there to Forbes AFB, 1959-1962 in the RB47, with **Jim Jones** as AC. Then Eielson AFB 1963-1965 with the 6th Strat Wing and Offutt AFB, 1967-1969. Back to Eielson 1970-1972. Last assignment: Offutt 1973-1974, I believe the SR71 program. I am not sure of the dates or the outfits. It has been so long ago.

We never knew exactly what he did and he never talked about it. Now my three children (43, 40, and 36), are sorry they didn't ask him more questions. I wish we knew more. We are all enjoying the 55th web site and are reading about the crows, and about the missions they flew. I wish he had known about the 55th web site. He could have filled us in on the information we are now reading about.

I see many names of members we knew, and some on TAPS. I really enjoy reading Don Griffin's stories. I recall many humorous things Bert did when he was on Shemya. He and some buddies spent many hours digging up coke bottles on the beach looking for a certain name on the bottom that was worth "big money". He brought back several cases, which I still have stored in an old barn. Sold some at garage sales for a dollar a piece. There must be a lot of big holes all over that beach.

His last 28 years were spent in northern Wisconsin on Big Sand Lake on "his 40 acres of God's Country", surrounded by the Nicolet National Forest. He enjoyed every moment of it. He fished, hunted, raised milk goats, geese, ducks, chickens, cows, horses, mushrooms, had a garden and sapped maple trees. In between all that, he built a house.

Bert never gave up even to the end. No matter what happened, he was always cheerful, funny and was calm in a crisis, I never saw him ever flaked, even during an earthquake in Alaska. I could never get him to take to the basement in Topeka or Omaha when those darn sirens would go off during a tornado. Mr. Cool refused to leave his comfortable bed, and would sleep right through the storms. I was left to scoop up the little ones and head for the southwest corner of the basement, or in a bathtub, when there wasn't any basement!!

It was the best of times.....

I would like to have his name posted on TAPS. I am sure there are some who will remember him.

Thank you, **Carol Mattson**

(Condensed and edited from an e-mail of June 29, 2002.)

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Congratulations to all of you who contribute to and maintain this (55SRWA) web site. Very enjoyable for someone who has not attended many events, but who has stayed very active in DoD activities. Having spent so much time in the RB-47 and Wanda Bell (RC-135), I recall many fine events and people.

Jay Roland Monterey, CA

(From an e-mail June 12, 2002.)

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Dear Errol:

I am finally getting around to joining the 55th group.

Just to bring you up to date, I joined the 55th at

Forbes on Nov 29, 1955. Transferred to Offutt in June 1967, and then to Eielson AFB, AK, from July 1970 until I retired on July 31, 1973.

I retired to Austin, TX, and started college as a freshman with zero hours in Aug 1973. Joined the University of Texas police force in Nov 73 until May 78. Received my BA degree in accounting in Dec 77 and began graduate school in Jan 78.

After full time school and work for five years, I decided to start using my degree and became a Texas state auditor in the out-of-state division in May 78. I traveled very often. Was transferred to the Atlanta, GA, office from May 82 to Apr 91. Then went to the Culver City, CA, for a year and back to Irving, TX, where I remained until retiring (again) on May 31, 1999.

Made the retirement move to Lowell, AR, just six miles south of Bentonville, the home of Wal-Mart. Worked as a security guard for Cargill, Inc. in Springdale, AR, in order to claim my moving expenses. It was the first time I had ever had to move and pay for them myself.

Then in Jan 2001, I started work as an auditor for the state of Arkansas and still travel out of state quite a bit.

Over the years, I have met many (*former*) 55th personnel: **R.L. Smith** and **Claude Saunders** in Austin; **Doug Hagie** and **Pete Spear** in Atlanta. Had dinner several times with **Pat Prislusky (Vic's widow)** in Gahanna, OH; and talked with **Gil Agronis** on several occasions.

One big meeting was with Regis Urschler, who comes to Fayetteville each year for an air show with his P-51. He briefed me on the reunions and the monument brick program. I would like to give a donation to that project.

I'm enclosing a check to for the annual dues to join the association.

Thanks a lot, **Bob Gmitter**. Lowell, AR
(*Condensed and edited from a Feb 27, 2002 letter.*)

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Max:

In the last issue of *Videmus Omnia* is an announcement of **Leta Smith's** passing. Leta was affectionately known by many of us as "Pooch", a nickname bestowed on her by her husband, **James E. Smith**. Somewhere along the line "Murphy's Law" came into play and (*his name*) came out as "Jigs Casey", as shown in the TAPS of the newsletter, instead of (*his nickname*) "Jig Easy".

You will probably get a number of e-mails from others pointing this out. You might mention this *faux pas* in the next newsletter.

J. E. was an RB-50G aircraft commander in the 343rd at Barksdale and Ramey in the early '50s.

Cheers, **Andy Meyer** Austin, TX
RB-50E /F driver, 338th, 38th SRS
(*From an e-mail 02/11/02*)

Mea culpa. It is as Andy reports. The original notification of Leta's demise said she was Jig Casey's widow and came in third-hand. There were indeed others who noted the error and wrote or e-mailed. All spoke highly of J.E. Smith as a person and pilot. Another follows. VO regrets the error. Note the disclaimer in the TAPS directory.

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Dear Errol:

In the most recent newsletter (Jan 02) the obituary of Leta Smith was in error. The item stated she was the widow of "Jigs" Casey.

She was the widow of one of the 343rd's most proficient aircraft commanders and dedicated officers. A pilot who was a real leader and whose crew would have followed him anywhere.

His name was James Edward Casey. He came to be called "Jig Easy", derived from his first two initials.

His RB-50G crew was put together in Ramey AFB, P. R. in 1950 and flew quite a few productive missions during the Korean War and the Cold War. An RB-50 crew was made up of sixteen closely bonded souls. As many have done before, and many after, we encountered our share of hazards; but, we were extremely fortunate and came through it all unscathed.

Two members of Jig's crew were West Point grads: the pilot, **Arnold "Piege" Winter**, and a navigator, **John E. Kulpa**, who eventually became a major general.

Respectfully, **Jim Stitt**. Kokomo, IN
(*From a letter, April 11, 2002*)

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Sirs:

I have a copy of an AF Form 77, Letter of Evaluation, that I received from Major Marvel, Chief of Maintenance, TUSLOG Det 50 (Incirlik AB, Turkey) following a busy December 1965. We had two EB-47E Tell Two 'Iron Works' aircraft and one RB-47H.

The 23 missions flown from 15-23 Dec were high level cover missions for air/sea rescue over the Black Sea, searching for a downed RB-57.

EB-47E, tail #53-2315, flew 106 hours, crewed by **TSgt Claude Swindel**; EB-47E, tail #532316 logged 95 hours, crewed by **A1C Billy Stout**; and the RB-47H, (tail # ?) flew 73.6 hours, crewed **SSgt Robert Garst**.

The Turkish government shut us down on 24 Dec (*under pressure from the Soviets*), so we actually flew 274.6 in 23 days. I don't know if this is a record for flying time in 23 days or not.

I don't remember the names of the flight crews on those missions, but I am sure someone out there still remembers that fiasco (*sic*).

(Anyone reading this care to chime in with more names and details? Max)

The Form 77A was the only recognition I received, as the aircraft ground crews were only doing what was expected of us.

Thanks, **James Rodecap**, MSgt USAF-Retired
Former Crew Chief, RB-47H, RB-47E, and
EB-47E/TT Pomona, KS (*From a letter 3/1/02*)

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Dear Sirs:

Forty-three years have not at all diminished the intense pride I have always felt about being a member of the 55th. I just recently learned of your web address, and am so eager to become a member of the Association.

I came to the 55th at Forbes AFB after my training at Mather AFB, CA, in early 1958. I was a navigator and went through RB-47 ground school expecting to be 'crewed up'. But, that never happened. I was assigned instead as an Air Operations Controller and helped run the command post from 1958 to August 1959.

Col Holbury gave me the job, but I worked for Maj Jim Briscoe, who ran the command post. I did fly the occasional training mission with the 343rd and the 38th. But, most of my time was spent in the command post. I mean this quite literally. We worked very long hours.

I look forward to keeping abreast of all your activities. I have included a check for a three-year membership.

With many thanks and very best wishes,

David A. Schum Vienna, VA
(From a letter March 4, 2002)

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Dear Errol:

Enclosed is our contribution to the Cold War Memorial Monument.

I was assigned to the 55th in the spring of 1950 as a PFC. I became a member of "Hanna's Hellions" as a weather-gunner on the RB-50E (what the hell is a weather-gunner?). I was also an inflight refueling operator (hose and drouge). We flew many missions out of Ladd AFB, AK, in the early '50s. That was the beginning of a great career for me.

Darlene and I were married when I was stationed at Ramey AFB, P.R. I had to have permission from my squadron commander, Major **Lee R. Williams**. We celebrated our fiftieth anniversary in September 2001.

I owe my career to the encouragement and guidance of K. C. Hanna, Harold Bonney and Vince Dilly. They urged me to apply for OCS in 1953 when we rotated to Forbes. I graduated from OCS in Dec 1953 and pilot training in Dec 1954.

I retired in 1976. What a ride!

Bob Brammer Atwater, CA
(From a letter Dec 10, 2001)

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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 for sale. The logo is on the left breast, no pocket, white with red trim, navy blue front placket. They are full cut with a long tuck-in tail; 100% cotton, but shrink very little. **The cost is \$22 per shirt.** Also available are royal blue ballcaps with the dual-shield, **at \$7 each.**

The current inventory is about forty caps; shirt sizes of small - 2, large - 22, XXL - 1, XXXL - 3. There are no medium or XL in stock.

(There is a charge of \$4.00 for postage. Checks should be made to the 55th SRW Association.)

Max Moore is now the vendor for the shirts and caps. Anyone desiring to purchase either or both can contact him at e-mail: MaxMoore55@aol.com; phone (402) 291-8272; 201 Basswood Court, Bellevue, NE 68005-2001.

Both items are of excellent quality and by consensus, the best looking we have ever had, and one more way to readily identify with your Association and 'show the logo' at appropriate

events. They have been popular items with the active duty troops of the 55th Wing.

Charlie Waters was responsible for ordering the items prior to the Melbourne reunion in May 2001. If they continue to sell so well, we will have to order another batch.

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ASSOCIATION TIE

Sam Pizzo's vision of the Association's version of a 'regimental tie' has come to fruition! In fact it made its sterling debut at the SAC 2002 reunion. The ties were literally jumping off Sam's pushcart and onto the necks of attendees. (*Some observers saw it as Sam garroting by-passers.*)

Many 55thers proudly showed their colors at the reunion banquet and it was a ready identifier of our numbers and presence.

55th SRWA TIES

\$20.00 Each
Make Checks Payable To
55th SRW Association-Ties
No Cash Please

Mail Check to:
Sam Pizzo
218 Nottoway Dr.
Mandeville, La. 70471

Wear Yours at the
Memorial Dedication
September 2003

It is an attractive and distinguished blue and red striped design with the Association's dual shield logo prominently displayed in the tie's center. A fine gold line defines every fourth blue/red stripe.

The entire Board of Directors is encouraging as many members as possible to purchase and wear the tie to appropriate events at the Dayton reunion, especially the banquet.

It is costly to reorder a small number of ties, so when this batch of ties is sold, that's it. In other words, **"This is a one-time good deal, GI."**

There are about 200 ties remaining for purchase. The price is \$20 each and includes shipping, postage, and Sam's eternal gratitude. **Order now so as not to be left out. First come, first served. When they are gone, they're gone.**

Those not sold by Sam, or by Bob Krist in the Offutt area, will be available at the next reunion.

Contact Sam at (948) 845-7455 or e-mail: sampizzo@webtv.net; Bob at (402) 390-2483 or e-mail: rjkrist@cox.net.

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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@mchsi.com (*New*)

Newsletter Editor:

Secretary Max Moore
201 Basswood Court
Bellevue, NE 68005-2001
e-mail: MaxMoore55@aol.com

Association Web Page Comments/Ideas

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

TAPS – News of Association members, friends 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 how much and how accurate the information given.

(Note: In other words, if there are mistake, it's someone else's fault!)

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YOUR 55TH SRW 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 it out.

Webmeister Don Griffin and his creative cyber-sidekick, **Dave Johnson**, form a dynamic duo to maintain the site. They do some eye-popping work, folks.

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.

The latest newsletter is posted, along with upcoming and updated reunion info, and important bulletins on projects in progress, such as the Cold War monument. There is e-mail traffic on many subjects of interest to members. Lots of good stuff.

Even so, Grif is always looking for input from members. Send him pictures, war stories, anything you want to share with the Association.

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ASSOCIATION HISTORY/RESEARCH

Be advised that Secretary 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; past Board of Directors election results; significant events, accomplishments, projects in progress and donations made.

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

(Note: Due to the underwhelming number of requests we had for this info, this is the last time this item will be printed.)

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I Am The Flag

I am the flag of the United States of America.
My name is Old Glory.
I fly atop the world's tallest buildings.
I stand watch in America's halls of justice.
I fly majestically over institutions of learning.
I wave over fields and arenas of athletic endeavor.
I stand guard with power in the world.
Look up and see me.
I stand for peace, honor, truth and justice.
I stand for freedom.
I am confident.
I am proud.
When I am flown with my fellow banners,
My head is a little higher,
My colors a little truer.
I bow to no one!
I am recognized all over the world.
I am revered – I am saluted.
I am loved.
I am respected – and I am feared.
I have fought in every battle of every war of my
country for more than 200 years.
I was flown at Valley Forge,
Gettysburg, Shiloh and Appamatox.
I was there at San Juan Hill, the trenches of
France, in the Argonne Forest, Anzio, and the
beaches of Normandy.
Guam, Okinawa, Korea and
KheSan, Saigon, Vietnam know me.
I was there.
I led my troops, I was dirty, battleworn and tired,
But my soldiers cheered me and I was proud.
I have been burned, torn and trampled on the
streets of countries I have helped set free.
It does not hurt for I am invincible.
I have been soiled upon, burned, torn and
trampled in the streets of my country.
And when it's done by those with
whom I've served in battle – it hurts.
But I shall overcome – for I am strong.

I have slipped the bonds of Earth
 and stood watch over the uncharted frontiers of
 space from my vantage point on the moon.
 I have borne silent witness to all of America's
 tragedies, and its glorious triumphs.
 But my finest hours are yet to come.
 When I am torn into strips and used as bandages
 for my wounded comrades on the battlefield,
 When I am flown at half-mast to honor my
 soldiers, or when I lie in the trembling arms of a
 grieving parent at the grave of their
 fallen son or daughter,
 I am proud.
 For all who still love and respect me, may I fly
 proudly forever into the future.
 I am the flag. *Author Unknown*



**55SRW ASSOCIATION ATTENDEES
 SAC 2002 REUNION**

ADAMS, Sparky and Connie
 ARMSTRONG, Eve
 BACK, George and Gerrie
 BARRETT, Burt and Charleen
 BLOUNT, Harris and Nancy Kussmann
 BORDEN, Andy
 BROWN, Bob and Cathy
 CALDWELL, Jim and Nancy
 CAMPBELL, Eva
 CASELTON, Jean and Sue
 COEFIELD, Ralph and Joan
 CORBETT, Wayne
 DAWES, Tom and Lorraine
 DESROCH, George and Dorris
 ERNST, Bill and Linda
 FAIR, Roy and Libby
 FRASER, Bob and Greta
 GARDNER, Don and Joan
 GARRITY, Tom and Francine
 GIRODANO, Rich and Anita
 GRIFFIN, Don
 GURNEY, Don and Barbara
 HARRISON, Tommy and Marty
 HICKS, Frank and LeWanda
 HOBERMAN, Errol and Sue
 HOOVER, Robb and Shirley
 HOWARD, Russ
 JOHNSON, John and Toni

JOHNSON, John T and Dee
 KEMPF, Bob and Tina
 MALONEY, Jim and Peg
 McRANEY, Jeff and Cecelia
 MICHAEL, Alan and Peggie
 MILLER, Paul and Judy
 MITCHELL, Larry and Susan
 MIXSON, Marion (Hack) and Mary
 MOLLNOW, Marv and Cindy
 MOORE, Max and Carol
 MORRIS, Ray and Dora
 MORROW, Jim(my Jet) and Carole
 MURPHY, H. George and Marie
 NAVARRO, Lloyd and Sylvia
 NICHOLS, Mary Dunham and Don
 PIZZO, Sam and Mary
 POTTER, Pete and Treva
 PRINGLE, Allen and Rita
 PURDUM, Dick and Lorraine
 RILEY, Jim and Roberta
 ROSSER, Bill and Elly
 SAVAGE, Robert (Doc) and Lia
 SCHWADRON, Jacquelyn
 SCHWEIZER, Jack and Peg
 SEH, Bob and Sandy
 SHIMET, Wayne
 SIMMON, Bob
 SIMON, Bill
 SJOLUND, Dave and Carol
 SMART, Rudy and Terry
 SMITH, Al and Marty
 SMITH, Howard P.
 SMITH, Rick and Joy
 SMITH, R.L. and Hilda
 STAPLES, Don (Buck) and Donna
 STEVENS, Steve and Suzanne
 TAYLOR, Jim and Marion
 TOWERY, Tommy and Sue
 URSCHLER, Regis
 WAKEMAN, Ed and Linda
 WARD, Lloyd and Mary
 WATERS, Charlie
 WAYNE, John and Ada Mae
 WILSON, Ned and Mary
 WHITE, Ben and Pat Relya
 YANUZZI, Nick and Georgina



September 11, 2001, commemorative
nose art on a 55th Wing RC-135s



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THE REUNION

By Rachel Firth

Autumn leaves rustling together, to the appointed place, the old warriors come. Pilgrims drifting across the land they fought to preserve.

Where they meet is not important anymore. They meet and that's enough for now. Greetings echo across a lobby. Hands reach out and arms draw buddies close. Embraces, that as younger men they were too uncomfortable to give, too shy to accept so lovingly.

But deep within these Indian summer days, they have reached a greater understanding of life and love. The shells holding their souls are weaker now, but hearts and minds grow vigorous, remembering.

On a table someone spreads old photographs, a test of recollection. And friendly laughter echoes at shocks of hair gone gray or white, perhaps gone.

The rugged slender bodies lost forever. Yet they no longer need to prove their strength. Some are sustained by one of the "medicine miracles," and even in this fact, they manage to find humor.

The women, all those who waited, all those who loved them, have watched the changes take place. Now, they observe and listen, smile at each other, as glad to be together as the men.

Talk turns to war and planes, and foreign lands. Stories told and retold again, reweaving the threadbare fabric of the past. Mending one more time the banner of their youth.

They hear the vibrations, feel the shudder of metal as engines whine and whirl, and planes come to life. These birds with fractured wings can be seen beyond the mist of clouds. And they are in the air again, chasing the wind, feeling the exhilaration of flight close to the heavens.

Dead comrades, hearing their names spoken, wanting to share in this time, if only in spirit, as they move silently among them. Their presence is felt and smiles appear behind misty eyes. Each in his own way may wonder who will be absent in another year. The room grows quiet for a time.

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REUNIONS

B-47 STRATOJET ASSN, 3rd Reunion

September 19-22, 2002 Seattle, WA

Doubletree Hotel, Boeing, Museum of Flight

Contact: Sig Alexander, Ph: (210) 653-5361

12110 Los Cedros Dr, San Antonio, TX 78233

e-mail: sigmund.alexander@iworldnet.att.net

COMBAT APPLE, 35th Anniversary Reunion

Remembering RC-135 operations in SE Asia

September 26-29, 2002 San Antonio, TX

Contact: Bob Cope, Ph: (210) 680-9355

9100 Tourney, San Antonio, TX 78254-2439

e-mail: rcope6@earthlink.net

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AIR FORCE PHOTO MAPPING ASSN

Reunion 2002 September 25-28, 2002

Hope Hotel and Conference Center,

Wright-Patterson AFB, OH

Contact: AFPMA, 225 Southside Ave,

Webster Groves, MO 63119

Ph: (314) 961-0519 Fax: (314) 961-3177

e-mail: photomapper@aol.com

* * * * *

Everyone has to be some place. And once you get there, there you are.

* * * * *

No one should approve of political jokes. Too many of them get elected.

* * * * *

BOOK PLUG

William E. Burrows' book, "*By Any Means Necessary*, America's Heroes Flying Secret Missions in a Hostile World" is a well researched history of the clandestine air war during the Cold War. The 55th SRW is mentioned many times, and indeed, many 55th veterans were interviewed and/or are mentioned in the narrative.

Burrows' acknowledges, "the ubiquitous Robb Hoover is this book's godfather" for his significant assistance from the beginning of the book's research and editing.

The book will be available in paperback in September 2002 (it has been out since October 2001 in hardcopy) for \$10.50 via amazon.com.

The cover of the paperback features the ever popular picture of lined-up crewdogs by an RB-47; and they are: A/C **Jim Taylor**, CP **R. Tucker**, Nav **Tom Reed**, R1 **Bill Lewis**, R2 Hoover, R3 Hoberman, the younger, slimmer versions in 1966.

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YES, I'M A SENIOR CITIZEN

Senior citizens are constantly being criticized for every conceivable deficiency of the modern world, real or imaginary. We know we take responsibility for all we have done and do not blame others. BUT, we would like to point out that it was NOT the senior citizens who took:

The melody out of music,
The pride out of appearance,
The romance out of love,
The commitment out of marriage,
The responsibility out of parenthood,
The togetherness out of the family,
The learning out of education,
The service out of patriotism,
The religion out of school,
The Golden Rule from rulers,
The nativity scene out of cities,
The civility out of behavior,
The refinement out of language,
The dedication out of employment,
The prudence out of spending, or
The ambition out of achievement,
And we certainly are NOT the ones who eliminated patience and tolerance from personal relationships and interactions with others!!

Does anyone under the age of 50 know the lyrics to the Star Spangled Banner?

Just look at the seniors with tears in their eyes and pride in their hearts as they stand at attention with their hands over their hearts!

Remember.....inside every older person is a younger person wondering, "what the heck happened?!"

YES, I'M A SENIOR CITIZEN!

I'm the life of the party...even if it lasts until 8 p.m.
I'm very good at opening childproof caps with a hammer.

I'm usually interested in going home before I get to where I am going.

I'm awake many hours before my body allows me to get up.

I'm smiling all the time because I can't hear a thing you're saying.

I'm very good at telling stories; over and over and over and over.....

I'm aware that other people's grandchildren are not as cute or as smart as mine are.

I'm so cared for -- long-term care, eye care, private care, dental care.

I'm not grouchy, I just don't like traffic, waiting, crowds, lawyers, loud music, unruly kids, Toyota commercials, Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, barking dogs, politicians and a few other things I can't remember.

I'm sure everything I can't find is in a secure place.

I'm wrinkled, saggy, lumpy, and that's just my left leg.

I'm having trouble remembering simple words such as.....uh?

I'm realizing that aging is not for wimps.

I'm sure they are making adults much younger these days, and when did they let kids become policemen, firemen and college football coaches?

I'm wondering, if you're only as old as you feel, how could I be alive at 150?

I'm a walking storeroom of facts.....I've just lost the key to the door.

(From **Fred Glass**, e-mail July 13, 2002)

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Be good to your children. They get to choose your nursing home.

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