

RB47H Radome Fix

by Buddy Goddard

During the late 1950's I was a 1/Lt, an Aircraft Maintenance Officer in the 55th SRW, 343rd SRS, and my boss was Major Mike Rafferty, the Squadron Commander. Maj Rafferty was a pretty kool guy, and I liked him a lot, and the feeling was mutual. We played handball together and he kinda looked after me.

We had a bunch of TDY sites, and since I was single, he would tap me to go TDY all over the world. My first long TDY was to Little Rock AFB, where we maintained a group of maintenance folks to support our crews and aircraft that had to come there for evaluation. He sent me down there for a few months, and I did OK, and he was happy, so he decided to send me to some other places. One of the places he ended up sending me was over to England, to Brize-Norton AB, which was near Oxford. It was a great place, and I really liked it. I was able to get over to Germany and buy myself a little Mercedes Benz 190SL sports car, which was the ultimate kool car.

One day a bad thing happened! An RB-47H was out on mission, and during the refueling process, the tanker refueling boom punctured the nose radome. The RB broke off, and limped in to base, landing on fumes. We went out and assessed the damage, and while it was not real bad, it grounded the aircraft. Well trying to get support from Forbes, was always difficult. I sent several messages (TWX's) and got no answers. We tried the Ops Loop, but Forbes Ops said that was a Maintenance problem. We finally got an answer from Forbes Base Supply, and they said they had no spare radomes! The Detachment Commander was Major Lucius LeCroix and we put our heads together. The Brits, our hosts, told us that Vickers Aircraft had a plant about 40 miles up the road, so we took a bunch of pics of the damage, got the prints, and I took off to visit Vickers. They looked at the pics, and said, not a big problem. They told us to bring it up, and they would fix it. We pulled the radome, and the Brits gave us a very big truck and driver, off we went, delivering the radome to Vickers. We sent Forbes messages telling them what we were doing, and they said it was OK, as long as it did not cost anything. We just sorta ignored that! In about 6 days our radome was ready, and we went and got it. They had fixed it, and tested it in their wind tunnel, and done a lot of other testing, and it was good to go. The problem was the bill was about \$12,000 \$US. We picked it up, and I signed for it, and told them that I would get back to them about the bill.

We got the radome back on the RB, and everything was OK. The problem was the bill! The Forbes folks told us to send the bill to 3rd Air Force DM (Director of Material) in London, and they would take care of it, which I did. A week or so later I got a TWX to report to the 3rd AF/DM (Lt. Col. Don Selbie) in London. I heaved a huge sigh of relief because Lt. Col. Selbie had been the DM at Forbes, and we knew each other well. I went to London, and arrived at Colonel Selbie's office, and his secretary showed me into his office. I had expected to receive a rather warm reception, since we had known each other at Forbes, but that is not what I got. I said "Good morning" and reached for a chair to sit. He looked up from his paperwork, and said, "Did I offer you a seat--no I did not--please remain standing, at attention!" What I got from there was an ass blistering, ass chewing, that I had never

received before, reading me chapter and verse about the rules of procuring goods and services, with no authority. He must have gone on for 10 minutes, at which time he closed by asking, "have I made myself clear". I allowed as how he had, and it was that point that he allowed me to relax from my "Attention" position, and sit down.

At this point he explained that I had committed the Air Force to spend some \$12,000, with no authority, but then he smiled, extended his hand, shook mine, and said I am very proud you for being so resourceful. We parted company, on that high point.

Many years later, I had retired from the Air Force and after working United Technologies in Sunnyvale, CA, was hired by Martin Marietta Aerospace, as an executive. I went to Denver to inprocess and ended up in the Executive Dining Room for lunch. I looked across the room, and there sat Fredrick D. Selbie, a high level executive with Martin. I walked across the dining room, and stood in front of Colonel Selbie, and said, "Excuse me sir, do you remember me from our days at Forbes?" He replied, "Mr. Goddard, I remember you very well from out time in London, and I presume you have never since done any illegal procurements." And we both laughed.

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