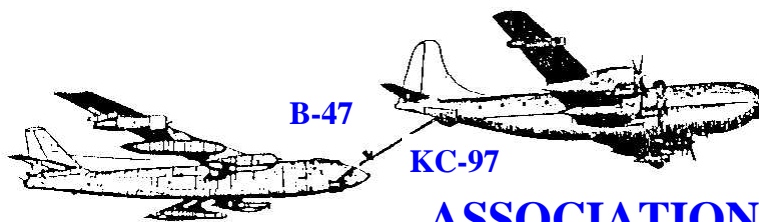


307TH BOMB WING



ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 31

For all former members of the 307th Bomb Wing at Lincoln AFB, Nebraska

JULY 2000

Lincoln 2000 a Great Success Fort Worth in 2002

We had a really good time in Lincoln. Attendance was most gratifying. Overall Registrations 341, Golf 17, Tours ANG/Lincoln 169, Memorial Dedication 245+, SAC Museum 245+, Ameristar Casino (riverboat) 106, and the Saturday Night Banquet, 318.

The Embassy Suites was an excellent location for the reunion, close to the Haymarket area, around and near the old train station where older buildings nearby are being refurbished and with many restaurants in the vicinity. The hotel is new, having only opened 1 May 2000. Everyone liked the hotel, the large atrium was a great place to gather and talk. The rooms were spacious, could sleep four easily. Our registration desks and hospitality rooms were co-located on the ninth floor (top) of the hotel. Robert Loffredo (one of our unit historians) did a great job setting up the memorabilia rooms, we had many things to look at and read. The Hospitality rooms were also well received, talk - talk - talk we did some of that. We had a combination of four rooms to roam.

I'm told the golfers enjoyed the Highlands Golf Course overlooking the Old Air Patch and one of our ladies, Sue Johnson, shot an incredible 83 - I can tell you that's really good, the course is not easy.

The visit to the Nebraska Air Guard was

very rewarding - we first received a 35 to 40 minute briefing by Col Barry Bruns, Vice Commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing. The briefing was a bit of history of the Guard and how they came to be where they are today. It was striking to many of our people, as most had not realized how deeply involved the Guard is today in our National Defense. The Nebraska Air Guard has 9 KC-135R's assigned of which 1 to 3 are usually away to foreign locations. We were, much to our delight, escorted around and through one of their KC 135's. The thrust from each engine is 22,000 pounds. The planes have recently had their flight instrument systems upgraded to the very latest available. It is estimated these aircraft may very well be in use until 2025.

We heard many ooh's, aah's and wow's about how Lincoln has changed in the past 35 years. Our population in 1965 was approximately 195,000; today it approaches 300,000. There is a new Regional shopping center located 5 miles South of O St. at 27th and Pine Lake Road, just East of Lincoln Memorial Park. That's a long way out for us of 1960-65 days. North 27th St. will soon be built all the way to I-80. The new construction taking place is unbelievable.

Friday was a busy day. We started the day with a visit to our Veterans Memorial Park at Normal Blvd and A Street

(located within Antelope Park). This park was started some 10 years ago by many of our local veterans and has grown steadily since that time and includes many memorials Commemorating Veterans of all Services. Our goal this day was to honor those of the 307th departed in the years 1954-1965. A Memorial Bench was dedicated to honor them and in a way to honor all who served at Lincoln in those years. Billy Williams gave the Pledge of Allegiance and Reverend Leroy McMath led us in prayer. Wally Whitehurst read the names of each of those lost, after which taps were played. The Vietnam Veterans of America, Local Chapter 727, provided an honor guard. Two of our members are on the board controlling the Veteran Park activities. They are Bud Ostgaard and Billy Williams, also, Tom Mills helped in the construction phase of the memorial. (Pictures of the bench are in this newsletter). We now have three memorials in place - Dayton 1996 BENCH - Colorado Springs 1998 PLAQUE - Lincoln 2000 BENCH. If you are in one of these locations now or in your travels you should make it a point to stop and take a look.

In-Flight Lunches were served and we were off to the SAC Museum in 5 buses and a 15 Pax Van. After 40 minutes, there is the museum, all 300,000 square feet of it, with the SR 71 under glass out in front. It's spectacular and a sight to see. The museum has a large number of aircraft and artifacts on display. I won't cite all of them, but, some are: B-47,

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KC-97, B-36, B-52, B-25, C-47, T-33, B-17, B-58, B-26, FB-111 +++++

Our group really enjoyed the Museum, but concrete becomes harder with age, so 2-3 hours later we moved on to different venues. Three buses returned to the hotel and local activities of choice. There are many restaurants near the Embassy Suites. Two buses and the van went to the Ameristar Casino south of Council Bluffs, IA. It's a lovely place with gambling and several good restaurants. The winners talked a little bit and the losers didn't say anything. I think a good time was had by all. We were a little late getting away from the Casino as we thought we were two people short in our count, we finally left fully expect-

307th Bomb Wing B-47/KC-97 Association

Chairman: Tony Minnick, 5920 Robin Court, Lincoln, NE 68516. Phone 402-423-6848. Email: tonym@inetnebr.com

Chairman's Committee

Secretary & Membership: Vern Biaett, 9519 W Timberline Drive, Sun City, AZ 85351. Phone 602-972-7328. Email: Vbiaett@aol.com.

Treasurer: Sue Jacob, 4420 N 10th St, Lincoln, NE 68521. Phone 402-477-6842. Email: VSJAKE@juno.com

Newsletter: Mike Gingrich, 1525 Edenwood Drive, Beavercreek, OH 45434. Phone 937-426-5675. Email: mikegingri@cs.com

Co-Historian: Robert Loffredo, 6004 SW 2nd St, Des Moines, IA 50315. Phone 515-285-3445. Email: mustang51h@juno.com

Co-Historian: Ernie Pence, 2001 A St, Schuyler, NE 68661. Phone 402-352-5327.

Co-Founder: Billy Williams, PO Box 29233, 5141 N 72nd St, Lincoln, NE 68529-0223. Phone 402-466-9301.

Co-Founder: Betty Pelletier, 205 W Palma Drive, Green Valley, AZ 85614. Phone 520-625-2936.

The Association is a non-profit Veterans Organization. All contributions to the organization are gratefully received, but are not deductible under IRS Code. The Chairman is elected by majority vote of all members at each business meeting. The Chairman's Committee serves at the pleasure of the Chairman.

ing to get a call that we left someone. No calls! We drove back to Lincoln in heavy - heavy rain all the way to Waverly.

Saturday Business Meeting. This was not a long meeting, but a few things need to be told. Mike Gingrich received a standing ovation for his hard work designing and editing the newsletter, Beverly Minnick also received recognition for her hard work in trying to keep track of the address, telephone and E mail changes. These are not small tasks. WE REALLY WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR LETTING US KNOW WHEN ANYTHING, REPEAT, ANYTHING CHANGES! Vern Biaett, our secretary reported there were 191 changes in the last two years. I presented for the first time a 307th BW History Book put together by several of our members. **It is a continuing work in process.** Forty copies were sold in the meeting and orders were taken for 26 more (to be mailed). You may order one for \$ 5. It is our hope there are more things out there which can be reported and the history can be corrected and expanded. **We need more input.**

Vern Biaett nominated me as Chairman for another two years with a caveat that a Term Limit of two years be applied to the Office of Chairman for the Association. The motion passed by acclamation.

Next, we asked for a location for our 2002 Reunion. RT Boykin suggested Fort Worth, TX and volunteered to be the Reunion Chairman. A voice vote approved the location.

Immediately after the meeting, picture taking started. Reunions, Inc couldn't find a photographer for us and at the last moment Andrea Mills (of our committee) agreed to take our unit and individual pictures. She did a great job and I as Chairman am very grateful. Any one wanting a Memory Book, who did not order one, can still do so, but time is short. They are \$25.00 (in color) which includes mailing - don't delay.

Saturday night was a time to celebrate and we did in great fashion. We started

with a cocktail hour provided by the hotel, drinks of choice. Our entertainment was provided us by The Lincoln Continentals, a Barbershop Harmony Group (50) of which Wally Whitehurst is a member. It was 30 minutes of pure delight, everybody loved it. Dinner was excellent and we had a trio playing golden oldies for our dancing pleasure the rest of the evening.

Sunday morning we said our good-byes and said, meaning it, we will see you in Ft Worth. RT Boykin promises we will have a great time.

OK, now to summarize. Send your orders for History Books (\$5), Reunion Memory Books (\$25), or current address rosters (\$3 or a larger donation) to me at 5920 Robin Court, Lincoln, NE 68516. Don't delay.

At this time, I want to thank my committee for their outstanding help in 2000. They are: Jake & Sue Jacob, Tom & Andrea Mills, Bev Minnick, Bud & Shelley Ostgaard, Wally & Peg Whitehurst, Bill & Jean Williams. Others who assisted us were Suzanne Dotson, Ruth Hibdon, Jane Sutton Judds and Jim & Darleen Lancaster.

Tony Minnick

307TH BOMB WING B-47/KC-97 ASSOCIATION Minutes of the Business Meeting on June 24, 2000

Chairman Tony Minnick opened the meeting at 1008 hours. After the Advocation and the Pledge of Allegiance, the meeting was opened for new business.

Vern Biaett, the Secretary, discussed the need to keep addresses current for both the mailing of the newsletter and information for printing of the Association Roster every two years. It was noted that there were 191 address changes for the approximately 1250 newsletters we are currently sending over the past two years.

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Beverly Minnick had received most of the changes as forwarding addresses from the Post Office, which is expensive. Some were passed to Mike Gingrich and me by letter and E-mail. Beverly performed an extensive audit of our database from membership applications, reunion sign-ups and other information she possessed. Vern asked for and received a standing ovation for the great effort Beverly has given our association.

The newsletter was discussed and the work and long hours Mike Gingrich spends as the Editor and Chief of this activity. A suggestion to send the newsletter by E-mail was made from the floor. After a brief discussion this was taken under advisement for further study. Tony asked for and received a standing ovation for Mike for all his effort.

Sue Jacobs, our Treasurer read our current financial statement. The balance was \$2320.07.

There being no further new business, the Chairman opened the meeting for old business. Tony Minnick displayed a History Book of the 307th Bomb Wing starting with the beginning in WWII. Forty copies of this book were for sale at \$4.99 each. Updates and new copies will be made and information will be in the newsletter. Tony also outlined the trip to the Lincoln Memorial Park for dedication of those who lost their lives in the line of duty while serving at Lincoln AFB for 1954 to 1966. It was noted that we also have monuments for the 307th B-47/KC-97 Wing at the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio and at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

The floor was opened to nominations for Chairman for the next two years. Vern attached a rider to the nomination he was about to make that a "Term Limit" of 10 years be applied to Office of Chairman for the Association. Vern then nominated Tony Minnick for another term as Chairman. Note: Tony has been Chairman since 1992. Bud Flanik seconded the nomination. Being

no further nominations, Tony Minnick was elected and the Term Limit was approved by voice vote.

Then next order of business was to select the location for our next reunion in 2002. The Chairman asked for suggestions and volunteers to form a committee. RT Boykin suggested Fort Worth, Texas and volunteered to be the Reunion Chairman. RT suggested a poker tournament be held with each participant buying a set amount of chips. The person with the most chips in the end would be the winner. All money paid for the chips would be donated to the reunion treasury. There were no objections to this activity. It was also suggested an Air Show be staged, if possible.

An announcement was made of how the photographing of groups and individuals would be accomplished. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 1122 hours. Vernon L. Biaett, Secretary

Look Who Came to Lincoln

341 loyal 307th "Shepherders showed up for the festivities in Lincoln, although we lost a few of our regulars along the way. When we last met in Colorado Springs we found we had 14 people/couples who had attended all reunions. We now have ten who have attended all seven reunions, namely: Vern Biaett, Jim Carlton, Bill Carrier, Don Daley, Mike Gingrich, Merle Hahn, Tony Minnick, Don Nigro, Betty Pelletier, & Billy Williams. The editor notes that the Fightin' 424th accounts for 50% of the loyal attendees.

The folks who put aside graduations, weddings, vacations, trips to the vet, etc, to congregate in Lincoln, were:

Eugene Acosta; Gene & Betty Aenbacher; George & Pat Adams; Jim Adams; William & Shirley Adams; Charles & Margaret Akins; William Ashby; Mary (Bowling) Ashton; Charles & Peggy Baker; Mike & Harriet Barren; Roger & Dottie Beamer; Bill Bedinger; Roland & Ele Behnke; Margo Berkovitz; Vern Biaett; Larry & Jan Boggess; "R T" & Dru Boykin; Cec & Maureen Braeden; George & Pat Brannon; Gordy & Helen Brekken; Gaylen & Betty Brocka; Arnie Bruland; Bob & Pat Byrom; Jan Campbell; Jim & Carolyn Carlton, Guests: Gene & Carmen Bruning; Bill & Grace Carrier; Jim & Meg Chittenden; Johnny & Joan Clark.

Jim & Barbara Cone; Dick & Mary Coon; Bob & Nancy Corti; Neil & Maria Cosentino; Bill & Georgia Crane; Roger & Mary Cronk; Dallas & Julie Crosby; Don & Phyllis Daley & John Daley, Guests: Dan & Bonnie Daley & Brandon, Gary & Vivianne Daley, & Kyle, James & Suzanne Daniels; John Davila; George & Rita Davis; Jim Dayley; Hale & Ethel Dodge; Mike & Judy DeCarlo; Bill & Carole Doetzel; Virgil & Millie Domino, Guest: Dale Domino; Ordean & Evelyn Dravland; Barbara (Moore) Ekstrum, Guest: Rosella Vining.

Frank & Joan Felke; Jim Fields; Bob & Karen Fisher; Bud & Jan Flanik; Donna Gerstenschlager; Marge Gieker; Mike & Jan Gingrich; Ed & Diane Godec; Fritz & Faye Greenlee; Roy Hackathorn; Merle Hahn; Larry Hall; Leo Halpin, Guest: Patsy Modlin; Russell "Skip" & Betty Jean Heller; Ruth Hibdon; Leo Hill; Sedge & Wilda Hill; Elmo & Pat Hills; Jerry & Helen Hoffman; Jack & Alene Holt; Brent & Anne Horn; Jon & Suzette Igelman; Michael & Janet Iverson; Virgil "Jake" & Sue Jacob; Don & Ginny Johnson; Earl & Sue Johnson; Ross & Sharon Jones; Dale Jones; Robert & Peggy Jorgensen; Jane (Sutton) Judds; Don & Martha Kellum; Bob Kelly; Bob & Elaine Ketchum; Richard & Beverly Kies.

Donn Kimmel; Frank Kisner; Pete & Dody Kraska; Jim & Darleen Lancaster; Jerry & Penny Lanning; Gene & Thelma Lee; Elwood & Sharon Leonard; Larry Leppert; Robert & Betty Lofredo; Marvin Lundgren; Billy & LaRee Lyons; Dan & Alice Majerus; "Butch" Manning, Guest: Kathy Michaud; G T "Bud" Martin; Samuel & Wilma Martin; Wayne & Lois Matthiessen; Stephen & Dottie Mattick; W J "Mac" & Peg McCarthy; Ottis McClung; Pete & Pat McKay; Richard & Marilyn McKenzie; Rick & Marilyn McKinley; LeRoy McMath; F C "Mac" & Roseanna McMillin; Norm Menke, Guest: Mardy McCullough; Roy & Cathy Miller; Tom & Andie Mills; Bobby & LaVonne Millwood; Tony & Bev Minnick; Wally & Pat Mitchell; Adam Mizinki; LaVern & Virginia Musselman; Michael Myatt; Pete Myatt.

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Newsletter Schedule

The 307th Bomb Wing B-47/KC-97 Association Newsletter is published for the benefit of all former members of the 307th Bomb Wing of Lincoln AFB, Nebraska. It is expected to be published three times a year in March, July, and November.

Contributions for publication in the newsletter are encouraged, and are essential for the success of this newsletter.

(Continued from page 3)

Olivia Ness; George & Wauneta Nigh; Don & Angle Nigro; "Butch" & Diane Nollenberg; Darrell & Janet Norris; Bill & Loree Oertel; Merrill "Ollie" & Loneta Olvey; Albert Opitz; Vernon & Joan Ordiway; Bud & Shelly Ostgaard; Jerry & Helen Otten; Clinton Owenby; Clarence & Joyce Padget; Paul & Grace Palmer; Pat & Norma Patterson; Art Pearson; Betty Pelletier; Ernie Pence; John & Nancy Puckett; Pete & Betty Rawlins, Guest: Betty Wessel; Maynard & Ella Reece; Dick & Lois Reeh; Eileen Rich; Harold & Margaret Rodgers; Dean & Bonnie Roelle; Bill & Mary Rogers; Bob & Floyce Rose; Lou & Phyllis Roseling; Don & Trudy Salmonson; Lee & Pearl Schubert; Bob Schultz, Guest: Ray Coffin; Bill & Jeanette Schwob; Clayton & Rose Scott.

Bill & Merle Seay; Peter & Kathryn Shaughnessy; Jim & Judy Shelton; Donald Shilling, Guests: Donna Littrell, Mary Travis; Alan & Vivian Simpkins, Guest: Mike Simpkins; Jim & Twyla Sine; Jerry & Joan Sparks; Jack Speck; Keith & Eileen M Steele; Harold & Dee Struempfer; Robert Symanek; "J B" & Marty Taylor; "T R" & Eunice Taylor; Noble "Tim" & Gladys Timmons; Bob Titzer; Pete & Wendy Todd; JoAnn Tuin, Guest: Stephanie Lawson; Ralph "Harve" & Pearl Utech; Tom & Sharon Vandennack; Fred & Ruth Varn; George Vickers; Mary (Burford) Volheim; James & Irene Vrbka; Les Walrath; Frank & Rose Wanek; Charley & Betty Watkins; Don Watts, Guest: Jackie Vest; Rudy & Katy Webb; James W White; Wally & Peggy Whitehurst; Bill & Jean Williams; Bob & Jan Wise; Jesse & Jean Worley

Donations

We wish to acknowledge the generosity of those who have recently made donations to the Association General Fund.

William Gillespie
 Ronald Davis
 C.W. Peterson
 Karol Franzysen
 Albert Opitz
 Robert Jones
 James R McKee
 Phillip R Walters
 Anne King
 Gerald Morris
 Maxine Reeves
 Robert Patterson
 Richard E Scharf
 Stanley W States
 E. Johnson
 Betty Pelletier
 Wallace Mitchell
 Jim Lancaster
 Sedge Hill
 Frank Kisner
 Darrel Norris
 Gerald Otten
 Peter Shaughnessy
 James Shelton
 Harold "Pete" Todd
 Ronald Trump
 Leslie Walrath

Robert Loffredo
 Dale W. Jones
 Richard Kies
 Jerry Hoffman
 Perry Hoisington
 Jim Dayley
 Leo Hill
 Gene Aenchbacher
 Gene Lee
 R T Boykin
 Dick Coon
 "Butch" Manning
 "Mac" McCarthy

Enlisted Party

Prior to this year's Reunion, several of us, (Tom Mills, Ernie Pence, Bud Ostgaard and me) had an idea and thought we'd try something different to encourage more Enlisted guys to attend. We thought we'd put ourselves out on a "limb" when we planned this party. BOY! Were we surprised. I couldn't get over the response we were getting and from guys I (we) didn't know, but soon met. I'm not sure who spread the word, but we had the best turnout ever of FMS, A&E, OMS & CREW CHIEFS. Anyway, we had planned to have a Steak Cook out, figured on about 30-40, but guess what, we served a meal to over 100. Ernie and George Nigh cooked every one of those steaks and did a fantastic job. Of course some guy name "Daffy" wanted his cooked until it was like shoe leather, but they accommodated him...ha. My wife,

Jean, Andie Mills, Shelly Ostgaard, Gene & Thelma Lee provided the rest of the dinner. Tom Mills even hired a Country Music Band. Before I go any further, I need to also "thank" Wauneta Nigh, Jim & Darleen Lancaster for all of their help. Needless to say a FANTASTIC evening was had by all. There was sure a lot of hugging and hand shaking going on that evening! Everyone who came donated towards ALL of the expenses for the evening.

Hopefully, we can do something like this again prior to the Ft Worth Reunion, but it will need to be arranged by someone in that area. If there's any Enlisted guys in that area and would like to arrange this, please give me a call at (402) 466-9301 or email at wjwbwdw@juno.com.

By the way, for all of you who were at the dinner, the owners told me that ours was the "best" party, the most "behaved" group and that the building was left in great condition. I told them we had too much catching up to do, to get rowdy. Ha...

THANKS! again guys for making this a great Reunion. See you in Ft. Worth.

Billy D. Williams

Treasurer's Report			
307th Bomb Wing B-47/KC-97 Association			
Ending Balance from last report Feb 23, 2000:		\$3,711.20	
	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Deposits</u>	
General Fund Balance			\$3,711.20
Expenses:			
Postage	273.86		
Printing	547.25		
Office Supplies	<u>23.40</u>		
	844.51		- 844.51
			2,866.69
Income:			
Donations		1,802.00	
Interest on account		<u>22.38</u>	
		1,824.38	+ 1,824.38
Ending Balance July 15, 2000			4,691.07
Sue Jacob, Treasurer			



The Last Flight

Harry H Culler, Highland CA, 1993.

John Forman, San Antonio TX, date unknown.

Oliver Emile Fowler, ARS, Niceville FL, 1 February 2000.

Janell Hahn, Saratoga CA, 14 March 2000.

Arthur W Holderness, Jr, 307th Commander, Fairfield CA, 10 February 2000.

June Jacobs, San Antonio TX, 27 March 2000.

Lois J Johnson, 818th, Apache Junction AZ, 10 March 2000.

Lewis M Kranz, Kenosha WI, 18 March 2000.

Francis Oenbring, AEMS, Lincoln NE, 29 April 2000.

Joseph Pekarski, date unknown.

William Reeves, Loveland CO, 2000.

Leslie C Swanson, 424th BS, Owensboro KY, 28 March 2000.

Ginny Warrell, Colorado Springs CO, 25 April 2000.

The verse on the SAC Chapel Memorial window says it best:
*"And God said who shall we send.
 I answered I am here, send me."*
 Isaiah 6:8

Back In Touch

307th members for whom we have obtained addresses since our last newsletter.

Eugene Acosta, 1901 Washington, Lincoln, NE 68502.

Neil Amtmann, 90 N Hollyberry Rd, Coupeville, WA 98239.

Ralph D Britt, 92 Willow Lane, Bristol IL 60512.

John Davila, 1234 W Garfield, Lincoln, NE 68522.

William Dentinger, 4104 Urbana Pike, Frederick, MD 21704-7730.

Ken Fisher, 2890 Lafayette Ave, Bronx, NY 10465-2231.

Roy Hackathorn, Rt 6 Box 166G, Marietta, OH 45750.

Harold W Herdt, 4011 55th St Ct NW, Gig Harbor WA 98335-8121.

Charles O Johnson, 8523 Phoenix Dr, Selma, TX 78415.

Dale Jones, 66 Southport Cove, Bonita Springs, FL 34134.

Harold Leppi, PO Box 722, Lake Hughes CA 93532.

Joe Litton, PO Box 36, Duncanville AL 35456.

G T "Bud" Martin, 7172 Swadley Ct,

Arvida CO 80004-1253.

James McKee, 1212 Meadowlark Place, Manchester TN 37355-2434.

Otis McClung, 201 Parklane, Pittsburg, TX 75686.

Clinton Owenby, 13937 E Louisiana Place, Aurora, CO 80012.

John T Swetokos, 5350 NW 49th Ave, Coconut Creek FL 33073-3708.

George Vickers, 515 S 11th St, Payette, ID 83661.

Charles A Williams, 207 E 9th St, Plainfield NJ 07060.

Robert M Young, 724 Ridge Ct, Alamogordo NM 88310-8249.

Glad to have you with us!

What's the First Thing to Go?

Headline, Philadelphia Inquirer, 5 July 2000: "A Long Ago Promise to meet at Liberty Bell on July 4, 2000."

The accompanying photo showed a lady, identified as Pat Merman, in front of a crowd of people, carrying a sign that said "Ordiway Family." Therein lies a tale....

Two of our former three flight surgeons, Doctors Jon Igelman, and M Vernon Ordiway attended and enjoyed old companions at our Lincoln reunion. (We've not been able to locate our third doc, Bill V Hewett). Vern Ordiway then returned home to Ridgway, Pennsylvania, shortly thereafter to find a degree of notoriety in the pages of the Philadelphia Inquirer.

After leaving LAFB in 1963, the Air Force sent Vern to the Eastern Psychiatric Institute in Philadelphia for psychiatric residency training. There, he made acquaintance of a young, soon to be married, nurse, Pat Merman. While on a trip to Fort Churchill, Canada, to administer Air Force flight physicals, Ordiway picked up an Indian soapstone carving of a polar bear to present to Pat as a wedding gift. According to Pat, Doc Ordiway suggested meeting at the Liberty Bell at noon on the Fourth of July in 2000, "to see how their lives turned out."

Pat never forgot...The future meeting was a topic of conversation for years in Pat's family who own and operate seasonal gift shops in St Petersburg, Florida, and Ocean City, New Jersey. So, a half hour before the appointed time, Pat, her husband, and two of her four grown daughters, showed up at the Liberty Bell, with sign in hand. The appointed time came and passed, ...alas, no Doctor Ordiway.

An Inquirer reporter picked up on the story and succeeded in locating Vern in Ridgway and interviewed him on the phone. Vern could remember nothing of the proposed rendezvous. Although he could not remember Pat's name, he did remember her. It seems a few days earlier, he had indeed thought of her, when returning from the 307th reunion, he saw some similar Indian carvings.

Vern has since spoken to Pat over the phone and vows he will complete the delayed reunion when he attends the 98th BW reunion to be held soon in Philadelphia.

All's well that ends well!



The University skyline has changed!



Registration was busy



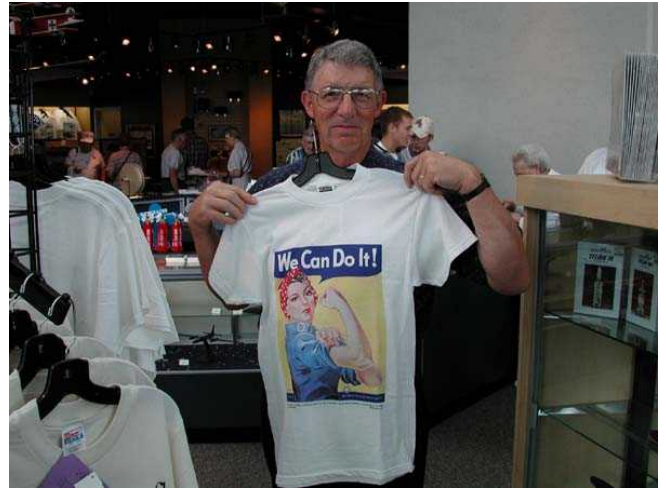
Touring a Nebraska ANG KC-135



Wally Whitehurst reads 307th casualty names to whom our Memorial was dedicated



307th Memorial at Lincoln Veterans Memorial Park

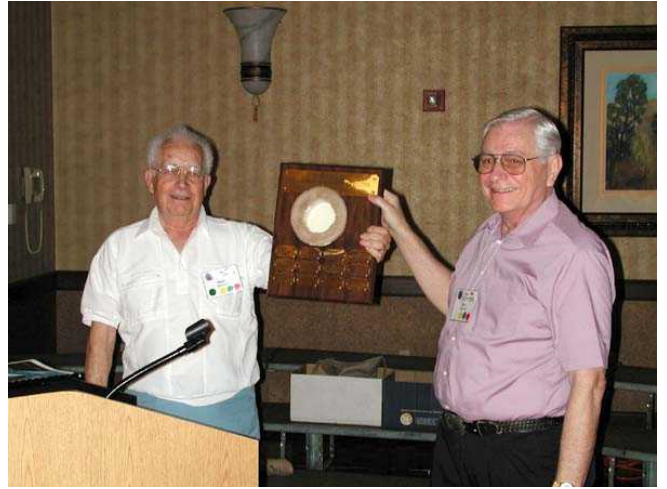


Pete McKay meets Rosie the Riveter at the SAC Museum

Back Again, Lincoln 2000



307th Bird at the SAC Museum



R T Boykin, chairman for the 2002 Fort Worth reunion, receives the coveted Reunion Chairman's Fur Lined Pot from Tony Minnick



The Kellums & Utechs enjoy the hotel's complimentary (Very) Happy Hour



45 members of the Lincoln Continentals Barbershop Chorus entertained us



The Barbershop Quartet with Wally Whitehurst reminded us of days gone by



Julie & Dallas Crosby move it on the dance floor

Around the Wing

Name That Crew! The nearby photo is that of an illustrious B-47 crew of the 307th. Can you name them? Let us know. We know, but we're testing your memory. The first ten persons to respond correctly will receive absolutely nothing (Offer void where prohibited). The photo is one of many from a collection brought to the Lincoln reunion by **Mary Burford Volheim**. Thanks Mary.

This issue, going by the date on the front page, is a little late. Blame it reunion withdrawal, and the combat fatigue of the editor. Note, post-traumatic stress syndrome is not invoked as a reason!

Another reunion, our seventh, has come and gone, and was enjoyed by many. Chairman **Tony Minnick** deserves gold star kudos for his hotel selection ... the suites were superb, the Happy Hours very happy, and the complimentary breakfasts scrumptious (the Belgian waffles were thicker than a Texas file!). Tony's committee did a bang up job, all arrangements were superb ...the Nebraska ANG tour and briefing ... the Memorial Dedication...the SAC Museum ...the riverboat casino ... and the harmonious melodies of **Wally Whitehurst** and the 45+ member Lincoln Continentals Barbershop Choir. Then...there was the special shindig put on in Havelock for the enlisted troops...esprit d'corps survives!

Fort Worth has been picked as our reunion site for 2002, with **R T Boykin, Jr** leading the charge. R T tells us (tongue in cheek?) that the festivities there will feature cow chip tossing and poker. At the Saturday AM business meeting R T was presented with the coveted reunion chairman's award: A plaque bearing the engraved names of all previous reunion chairs, with a mounted fur-lined pot inscribed "You never had it so soft!" Most previous reunion chairs are in full agreement with the inscribed statement.

We were hopeful of having our Division Commander, **Perry Hoisington**, join us in Lincoln, as he had signed up. Unfortunately, he had to cancel at the last minute as he had been hospitalized with a back problem. We hope things have improved for him and wish him well ...you can send him a card at 2111 Jefferson Davis Highway, # 121LS, Arlington, VA 22202.

After enjoying the reunion, **Clarence "Padge" & Joyce Padgett** returned home to Oklahoma, where Joyce had a cancerous kidney removed. Keep them in your prayers and send cards to their home at 116 S Morgan Dr, Moore, OK 73160.

Our address list auditor, **Bev Minnick**, tells us we have recently lost sight of **Uriel Blacksher, Charles C Kendrick, Paul M Savko, and Donald Ray Greene**. If any of you can help us relocate these fine gentlemen, please let us know.

Jim and Meg Chittenden, made it to the Lincoln reunion in

conjunction with one of her book signing tours. As many of you know, Meg is a prolific authoress with over thirty novels penned. Her current efforts are directed to mysteries, with Charlie Plato being the principal protagonist. To see what Meg's up to, visit her on the web at "www.techline.com/~megc".

While you are cruising the web, go to the Military Connections site at "www.military.com" and search for "307" under units. You'll find a section for the 307th Bomb Wing/Group, which includes both the B-29 and B-47 eras. You may see some familiar names who have registered there. We have already located several of our troops who had no prior knowledge of our association through this site. And, while you're at it, take a look at our official home page at "www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Barracks/2747/index.html". Historian Loffredo tells us he will be doing much work there in the near future, so tune in and see what happens. Loffredo also tells us, the idea of a B-47 related chat room has died for lack of interest after a trial period.

Last year, "**Jimbo**" **Shumake, Jr**, of Phoenix, lost his 51 year



old son, James Shumake III, a noted racer, in a tragic hit-run accident. Jim writes that he has reached a state of closure of sorts after the perpetrator was caught, tried, and sentenced to sixteen years. Jimbo concluded "call your son or daughter today and tell them you love them."

In the previous issue, we published **Hal Austin's** article about his 1954 overflight of the USSR. Hal told us he knew many who were assigned to the 307th and would like to hear from them. Hal can be emailed at "hraustin@worldnet.att.net".

Bill Novetzke offered a not-so-remarkable-307th record, in that his tanker crew, J-38, commanded by the not-so-late Ray Normandin, was the first tanker crew "allowed" to tag along after the bomber crews going to R&R on Majorca.

Jim Flavin, our retired Los Angeles law enforcement officer and world traveler, had a unique excuse for missing this year's reunion. He was busy getting married. Congratulations Jim!

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We'll see you and your bride in Cow-Town in 2002.

A new home has sprung up in Ouray Colorado. **Laurie & Donna Buntin** were hoping to have it finished in time to attend the Lincoln reunion...but...for those of you who remember the movie, "The Money Pit" and the famous line therefrom "Two weeks..."; would you believe late July?

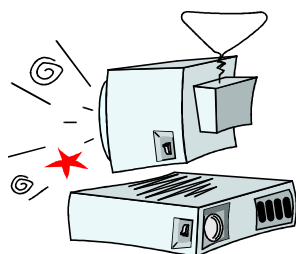
We received a short letter regarding the passing of Major **Lois Johnson**, who many of us knew. "I received your correspondence along with the 307th Bomb Wing Newsletter today. I regret to inform you that Lois passed away on March 10th, after an extended illness. She passed away at her home in Apache Junction, Arizona. I was fortunate enough to be there at her side. Lois had spent many hours telling me the tales of her military years. I grew up spending summers with her wherever she happened to be stationed at the time. I will always cherish those memories made and stories told. She always looked forward to her newsletter and especially the reunion photo she received. She recognized and told some good stories of many of the people pictured. I would appreciate a copy of the newsletter when her name in The Last Flight appears. I will be residing at the Apache Junction address." Respectfully, Brian H. Johnson, 4725 N. Wolverine Pass, Apache Junction, AZ. 85219. Email "bhj99@gateway.net".

Gossip at the reunion: **William & Shirley Adams** told Bev Minnick that they tied **Betty Hickman** in the 307th Roll of Remarkable Records, with two daughters and two sons born in Lincoln. Move over Betty! In addition, all the Adams kids have first names starting with D and middle initial L. Don't think we'll establish this latter coincidence as a subcategory of Remarkable Records!

Our first version of the 307th Bomb Wing History was published and made available at the Lincoln Reunion. In putting it together, we tried to include significant photographs from our files. We found that we had only small group photos for the maintenance squadrons,

and no squadron group photos for either the 371st or 372nd bomb squadrons. Help us make the second History edition better. If you have some of the photos we need, please send them either to the newsletter or to historian Robert Loffredo. If you need them returned, we will be glad to do so.

Others we've heard from in recent months include Maxine Reeves, Tom Dance, Bill Bathurst, Lillian Fowler, Harry Krebbs, Clay Robson, Woody Fail, & Fran Mercier.



Email Changes

Since the last issue of the newsletter, there have been numerous additions to the email list. We now have over 215 emailers.

Additions

Neil Amtmann: CRACK-ERS@WHIDBEY.net
 William Ashby: whashby@aol.com
 Roland Behnke: rfbehnke@chesapeake.net
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 Arnold Bruland: gobru3@netscape.net
 Pat Byrom: ByromP@cs.com
 Jim Chittenden: meg@mcchittenden.com
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 James Cone: critter@htcomp.net
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 Dallas Crosby: juliedall@aol.com
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 Lillian Fowler: oefowler@aol.com
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 Bill Williams: wjwbdw@juno.com
 Charles A Williams: cwilliams@mac.net
 Roy Wilson: f10jo@wilson.org
 Robert M Young: Bobalouie@Zianet.com

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Dick Amenell: rjamen@tni.net
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 Don Daley: jpdaley@earthlink.net
 Bill Erickson: thudf105d@earthlink.net
 Doug Gates: portai@usfamily.net
 Harry Krebbs: krebbs@compuserve.com
 Flip Latham: K4JHL@aol.com
 Lee Herridge: leeherr@juno.com
 Jerome Hoffman: jeromehoffman@juno.com
 Pete Kraska: pwkraska@email.msn.com
 Pete Martineau: Petemrtno@bigfoot.com
 A E Nollenberg: rv-238@juno.com
 Al Ottaviano: aottaviano@earthlink.net
 Les Walrath: leswalrath@earthlink.net

We are looking for current addresses for:
 Traeger

Send your email address in and if you would like to have a current list of 307th Email addresses emailed to you, drop a note to "mikegingri@cs.com".

Alaskan's Assault on the Mackinac Recalled

By Danny K. Shepherd

A Man's man - - That's how those who knew Capt. John Lappo back in the 50's referred to the pilot made infamous by his aerial assault on the Mackinac Bridge that connects the upper peninsula of Michigan with the lower. The story made headlines across the Midwest, and indeed the country, when news leaked out about the former Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, Executive Officer, flying a 2 ½ million dollar reconnaissance configured bomber, a RB-47E Stratojet, under the world's longest suspension bridge.

Lappo's circus act didn't result in any deaths, but he knows all too well what Marine Corps Capt. Richard Ashby felt like with his career on the line recently. Ashby, was court-martialed at Camp LeJeune, N.C., for recklessness resulting in the death of 20 people when the EA-6B Prowler he was piloting severed an Italian ski gondola cable early last year. Like Lappo, he now wonders if he has flown his last flight for the U.S. military. But that's where the similarities end.

It wasn't one of Capt. Lappo's 28 bombing runs north of the 38th parallel during the Korean War, or the stealth and skill used to navigate the Soviet Union just to isolate the location of enemy radars, or his tour of duty in Vietnam that made him infamous, but rather, it was a daredevil feat of gigantic proportions that brought Capt. Lappo to the attention of all the world, or at least to the attention of everyone who lived in the United States, and unquestionably to all who were currently assigned to the Strategic Air Command (SAC).

On 24 April 1959, the brash, confident, daring, highly respected and highly decorated 39-year-old Reconnaissance Aircraft Commander, with 15 years and 5700 hours of flying experience under his belt, wanted to add one more conquest to his long list of accomplishments. He had an inspiration - one that would be fulfilled, and one that would forever change his life as he and his family then knew it.

Born in Muskegon, Michigan in 1920, John grew up dreaming of men and their flying machines. He joined the military from Muskegon in 1943, and completed eight months of pilot training while assigned to the Army-Air Force Flying School in 1944. Upon successful completion of the school, John was awarded his 'Flight Officer' status and was ordered to Clark AFB, Philippines where he eventually transported troops throughout the Pacific to far fetched places like Shanghai, China; Guam, Hawaii, and Japan.

At first Lappo wondered if he'd ever get to fly outside of flying school. He and a few other Flight Officers were initially assigned to the depot at Clark awaiting further assignment to a squadron. Fearful that his flight currency status ran the risk of expiring, he convinced the sergeant-in-charge of the depot to check out a couple of planes to him and his 9 buddies

so they could remain flight status qualified. The sergeant insisted on a hand receipt, but John got his planes.

He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in January 1945 while still in the Philippines and was assigned to the 22nd Troop Carrier Squadron where he flew C-46's, C-54's, and DC-3's in support of troop movements. Promoted to First Lieutenant in July 1946, John continued flying troops throughout the Pacific and later, the European Theater of Operations.

Lappo got out of the service in 1948 and returned to Muskegon, Michigan where he had hoped to fit back into the mainstream, perhaps find a nice girl and raise a family.

His love for flying never waned so it wasn't surprising that John remained in the Active Reserve and retained his Class 'A' reserve flying status following clean-up operations from WWII. In 1951 however, First Lieutenant Lappo was recalled to active duty with the outbreak of the Korea War.

His first of 28 bombing missions into North Korea originated from the very base where he would spend the next several months of his life, Naha, Okinawa. Now, 'Captain' Lappo, he opened the bomb bay doors of his B-29, the 'Command Decision', and recounted "bombs away" on strategic as well as tactical targets throughout the war zone, only missing his target on one occasion when controllers failed to vector him onto a target and his fuel ran short causing him to land in South Korea. (*Note: the fuselage of Command Decision is on display at the Air Force Museum*). His plane was never hit by enemy anti-aircraft artillery, and during the course of the war, the 'Command Decision' dropped 2.5 million pounds of bombs on North Korean targets, and became the world's only bomber 'jet ace', having shot down four Soviet built MIG-15's during her Korean War service. In addition to the Korean Service Medal, John was awarded the United Nations Service Medal, the Air Commendation Medal, and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal among numerous other decorations and commendations.

Following the Korean War, Capt. Lappo received orders to attend the Officer Squadron School in Montgomery, Alabama. He was granted three days leave and transient time from El Paso, Texas to get there, but John had one very important stop to make along the way. He took a detour via Muskegon where he anxiously and excitedly asked his sweetheart, O. Kay Robinson, to marry him. She accepted his proposal and they were married the following day. And on the very next day she accompanied him to Montgomery. John was subsequently transferred to Lockbourne AFB, Ohio as a member of the Eighth Air Force's 352nd Bomb Squadron of the 301st Bomb Wing, Medium, Strategic Air Command. It was during this tour of duty that Lappo received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his electronic intelligence (ELINT) gathering role against the Soviet Union.

Although information available from that time indicates that he received his medal for services other than Photo Reconnaissance and ELINT gathering, cover stories such as 'risky' and 'highly sensitive' polar weather reconnaissance missions were used to

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divert attention from the 'Spy In The Sky' operations that he and his fellow reconnaissance pilots were flying deep into Soviet air space. These missions were so covert, that at times not even President Dwight D. Eisenhower was knowledgeable of their existence.

In fact, Eisenhower had forbidden any flights over Soviet airspace at that time, saying they "amounted to acts of war!" But his head of the Strategic Air Command, General Curtis E. LeMay had other ideas. Early on the morning of 8 May 1954, three RB-47's took off from Fairford, RAFB in Great Britain and flew around Norway to Murmansk. Two of the aircraft returned the way they came, the third, piloted by Capt. Hal Austin, flew south deep into Soviet territory. Before they knew what hit them, several MIG-17's had engaged them with a hail of cannon fire like they had never imagined. The reconnaissance-configured bomber was shelled, tracers flashing by on all sides, but not put out of commission and somehow Austin and his Co-Pilot, Carl Holt, managed to get the plane back to Great Britain.

Austin and his crew were the first to receive General LeMay's explanation why he was giving them the DFC vice a Silver Star, "...You've got to explain that to congress and everyone else in Washington so I'll give you guys a couple of DFC's instead!" What LeMay really feared was the President finding out about the incursion and the skirmish that nearly lost the United States an airplane and its entire crew!

General LeMay was more determined than ever to expand his network of bases where SAC subordinated reconnaissance bombers, RB-47'S, could strike an intelligence gathering offensive against the Soviets and their iron curtain strongholds, without fear of retaliation. Greenland offered such a place and squadrons from as far as Lockbourne AFB, where Lappo was stationed, began arriving en masse. Air bases, radar telemetry, and other order-of-battle information was the target of these 'Spies in the Sky' - all gathered for the highly classified, and extremely sensitive operation known only as 'Home Run!'

Shortly after Capt. Austin survived the onslaught of those MIG-17's, Capt. John Lappo and 26 other pilots flew three missions, consisting of nine aircraft each, over the polar ice cap from Thule, Greenland into the Soviet Union. Their goal, to conduct a unified broadbrush intrusion deep into Soviet airspace in an attempt to light up Soviet radars throughout the northern hemisphere and to conduct photo reconnaissance and ELINT collection operations against Russia's nuclear testing facilities at Novaya Zemlya and other tactical and strategic military facilities in the area. They were further responsible for locating naval bases, airfields, new construction facilities, and other military and industrial targets in the Northern, Baltic and Pacific Fleet areas of operation and evaluating Russia's Electronic Counter Measures (ECM), capabilities.

Sergei G. Gorshkov, 'Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet

Union,' was primarily responsible for the huge buildup of the Soviet Navy and it was General LeMay's objective to know all he could about Russia's order-of-battle, the location of its war machines, and their electronic nomenclature, including the offensive and defensive capabilities of each.

All three missions were a huge success, but only 26 of the 27 aircraft returned to Thule as prescribed. Major Lappo's experience would be different. Launching 900 miles from the North Pole and only five hours from Russia's industrial hub, Lappo refueled his RB-47E over the vast wastelands of the arctic, but overshot his target once he penetrated Soviet airspace because of thick clouds. As the aircraft commander, he had to make a critical decision between aborting the mission or doing the dangerous and time-consuming 360-degree circuit to accomplish his objective. During a recent account of that mission in a Documentary, titled "Spies in the Sky" and aired on the History Channel, Lappo said, "We went in there about 30 miles, and solid under-cast, and I looked over to the left about 15 miles and there was our target. So, I asked the crew if they were with me on making that 360-degree and they told me, well, the general told us not to make the 360, and I told them, well, hey, if we don't get that target he's going to have to send another airplane after it." When Lappo and his crew finally returned to Thule, the general approached him and said, "John, we told you not to make that 360." Lappo explained why he did what he did and the general exclaimed, "Yup, you shouldn't have, but I wished I had a squadron of (aircraft commanders just like) you!" 'Major' Lappo had just won the Distinguished Flying Cross!

Kay didn't know where her husband even was. All she knew is that her and the kids were stuck in Canal Winchester, Ohio and Major Lappo was off on some mission - weather related as far as she knew. But not in her wildest dreams did she imagine he was busy flying spy missions over Russia. She was so frustrated by the lengthy periods of TDY, her pregnancy at the time, and the secrecy of his service that the thought of returning to Muskegon, Michigan crossed her mind on more than one occasion. Five children, Suzette, John III, Leo Edward, Michael, and Helena all wondered with their mother when their father would return home. Was he in Labrador or perhaps Keflavik participating in yet another 'Operation Weather Stop'? Possibly it was another special operation like 'Project Monticello' with Lockheed in Marietta, Georgia, or 'Project Snow Flurry'. It could have even been another photo intelligence mission against the bases in the Soviet Far East along the Kamchatka Peninsula that ultimately had Lappo and his fellow aircraft commanders landing at Eilson AFB, Alaska. In fact, it could have been one of dozens of secret missions John has flown over the years, and she would have never known. Lappo's loyalty and trustworthiness to his country, to his service, was unquestionable. But her love for John never wavered, and soon, although not in the way she would have hoped for it to have happened, she would see John a lot more than she had been accustomed to. Lappo was promoted to captain five times!

Back in the 50's, an incentive program referred to as 'spot promotions,' more of a mathematical nightmare according to

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some, caught Lappo in a roller coaster ride between Captain and Major that wouldn't end until January 1961 when he was permanently promoted to Major. In most cases, squadron commanders were given a quota of 'spot promotion' slots. One month Lappo may have deserved the promotion, but there was no guarantee it was his to keep. If he failed to maintain minimum proficiency standards he was demoted and in some instances, the pilot had no control over meeting those standards. Following one such demotion Lappo recalls stopping by his favorite Hardware Store in the small Columbus suburb of Canal Winchester and the clerk saying, "Are you a Captain, again, Lappo? Did you screw up again?" It was a running joke between the two of them and the merchant meant no disrespect to John, as he fully understood the inherent quirks of the spot promotion system.

In one case however, the demotion was the fault of his dear friend, and nicotine-addicted navigator, Harry Wolfe. While simulating bombing runs out of his home airfield at Lockbourne, Major Lappo's navigator occasionally failed to accurately steer his pilot over the drop zone, needing to light up just one more cigarette. On one occasion Wolfe's habit caused the aircraft to miss its target by nearly 7,000 feet. According to Lappo, "the navigator could make you, or break you back in those days." How prophetic those words were to become.

According to historical weather data available for 24 April 1959, it was clear and mild that Friday as Capt. Lappo and his crew was returning from a routine nighttime simulated bombing and celestial navigation mission. It was early afternoon when their flight home neared the Mackinac Straits over Lake Michigan. The sun glistened off the occasional mild whitecaps of the great lake below, almost a mirror reflection of the sky that held Capt. Lappo's RB-47E aloft, like a glider gently floating, lifting slightly with every burst of air. The roar of the bomber's six engines seemed silent in contrast to the serenity of the moment. Afterall, the world's first swept-wing Stratojet should perform no less gracefully then it was at that very moment in time.

This was precisely the reason Capt. Lappo joined the Army-Air Force. Where else could a man retreat and see all the mountain tops at a glance, borderless land masses, and forget the hustle and bustle of the asphalt jungle. The world's longest suspension bridge connecting Mackinaw City in the south with St. Ignace in the north appeared no larger than a one-lane country road from high aloft. Only two vehicles were on the bridge, a car and a truck, both heading north. The bridge's towers climbed more than 500 feet, and her wire cables spanned the strait for more than a mile and a half. Then, quicker than the sun's rays could cast the bomber's shadow onto the waters beneath it, the silence was broken. The Strategic Air Command bomber headed nose first toward the blue surf below, stretching its wings like a majestic eagle, defiantly making its descent toward the mighty 'Big Mac.' The thrusts of its engines were deafening, but everyone aboard heard Capt. Lappo exclaim, "I'm taking her under!"

The crew was filled with excitement, save one. On this day his trusted friend and usual navigator, Harry B. Wolfe, wasn't onboard. Another navigator trying to get his flight hours for the month augmented the crew instead. The RB-47 continued to descend and came within 75 feet of reaching the deck when Lappo, heading east with the afternoon sun at his back, leveled her out and raced his way above the whitecaps at speeds that seemed to leave the plane's shadow in its jet stream. Then at the blink of an eye it was all over, he had shot through the 199-foot clearance beneath the bridge's deck and flew the plane up in a trajectory ascent reminiscent of an Apollo take-off from Cape Kennedy. The crew gave out a reverent, yet subtle hoorah knowing that they had just participated in one of the most beautiful pieces of flying ever undertaken by an Air Force pilot.

When asked whether there were any objections to him doing it Lappo said, "Yeah, the navigator recommended against it. Of course, I had no idea at the time that he was the general's son and that he was going to go rat on me once we got back to Lockbourne." This wasn't Lappo's first demonstration of flying bravado. A few years earlier he gave a booming salute to his old community back in Muskegon when he swooped down over the town's airfield in another B-47 just to say hello. The switchboard at the police station stayed lit up for nearly an hour after that stunt.

When asked why he did it, he said, "why do men climb mountains? Or what motivates them to go into space? It's just a sense of adventure that some men have and some don't." He added, "I've always wanted to fly under a big bridge. I thought it would be the Golden Gate. When I was flying missions to the Far East, I was a co-pilot, and I wanted to fly under the Golden Gate at night. But I couldn't induce the pilot to do it." That triumphant ascent up from the 'Big Mac', like an eagle returning to its perch atop a mountain, would be John Lappo's last flight as a pilot in the United States Air Force.

On August 10, 1959 it was preordained that he would be found guilty as charged at a general court-martial. He was accused of violating Article 92 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, disobeying a lawful order. Specifically, Air Force regulation 60-16 at that time stated, "Except during take-off and landing, aircraft will not be flown at less than 500 feet above the ground or water."

Lappo was quick to take full responsibility for his actions, and immediately pleaded guilty to the charges against him. Accordingly, it was not necessary for the prosecution to present witnesses substantiating guilt. John Lappo's character and integrity were above reproach, and this wasn't a court-martial about aerobatics or unsafe flying practices; his skills were superior and, for him, this feat was no more difficult or risky than taking his boots off at night. Character witness after character witness took the stand on Lappo's behalf, and to an officer and a gentleman, the comments echoed the same praise

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over and over again. When asked whether or not he would go out of his way to recruit Capt. Lappo into his command if he were not, Colonel Finlay F. Ross, Jr., Headquarters 301st Bomb Wing stated, "I most certainly would...Captain Lappo is a man's man...he can serve with me any time, any place." And when his squadron commander took the stand the defense asked, "Colonel Rees, how long have you known Captain Lappo?" "Approximately 6 years," he responded. Once again, the defense, "As his commander, and as a colleague, as an aircraft commander, will you please describe to this court your observations of Captain Lappo's abilities as a pilot and aircraft commander?" The Colonel obliged, "To make a statement, or to speak of Captain Lappo, is extremely difficult, to the extent that it's hard to find a place to start...his reliability is outstanding, and I've always known it to be so. Throughout this time I have watched wing commanders select him repeatedly for difficult missions, special assignments, classified projects of all types, difficult reconnaissance missions performed out of Iceland...the nature of the mission(s) necessitates that I say no more...(he) received the Distinguished Flying Cross." He continued, "On one occasion, fuel cell repair was going on...one of the airmen passed out...Lappo took matters in his own hands, and, in fact, was directly responsible for saving the boy's life.

During this particular operation (out of Greenland) Captain Lappo's wife was expecting a child, and, operating under extremely difficult circumstances, never once (did he ask) to be with his wife (in Ohio) through this period. This is the type approach that he takes to his duties. I don't think that I can say that he puts his duties before his family, in fact, I know I couldn't, but I could say that he never lets his personal problems, his family problems interfere." Colonel Rees made this remark knowing that shortly after they returned from this particular operation, Kay had the child she had been carrying, but unlike the other five, this baby lived to be only two weeks old. Colonel Rees' testimony continued on for sometime, but in the final analysis it boiled down to these few comments of admiration, the sort of comments only a true leader of men can make about one of his own. He said, "Go back to the front gate, and it says 'Peace Is Our Profession,' and this requires a strong force. We're all familiar with that mission. General Powers has been nailed down as to what is an adequate deterrent for us. He says no one knows. Sure, this is true. If some day SAC's mission would be boiled down to one aircraft and one crew and one weapon, I think that Lappo would qualify without a doubt to be the aircraft commander..."

Major John W. Burkhart, 352nd Bomb Squadron, preferred the charges against Lappo in his capacity as the squadron's temporary commander in the absence of Colonel Rees. However, when asked to comment on Lappo's ability as an aircraft commander Burkhart said, "...I have been with him for 5 1/2 years...I've never flown with a stronger pilot." During cross-examination when asked if he felt this was a serious violation, he responded, "I believe it's a serious violation. But in regards to the general court recommendation, I disagreed with it. But I was informed to sign these charge sheets as a matter

of formality." The prosecutor probed further, wondering aloud, "Why did you prefer charges if you disagreed with this court?" Surely considering a response reflective of the majority of his peers throughout the Strategic Air Command, and wanting to express the feelings of not only the personnel in his squadron, but those of aircrews and aircraft commanders stationed worldwide, Burkhart responded, "I agreed on punishment of a lesser extent," This incident does not effect my evaluation of Captain Lappo "whatsoever."

"Sir, the defense would like to call as its next witness, Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. Bachtell," Squadron Commander of the 99th Air Refueling Squadron at Westover Air Force Base, Massachusetts. "Sir, how long have you known Captain Lappo?" asked the defense counsel. The Colonel replied, "Approximately three years...I was in the 26th Wing...as an aircraft commander (with him) ...(then) as squadron commander which is now the 353rd Bomb Squadron, (and then) I became squadron commander of the 352nd Bomb Squadron..." The defense followed up, "Would you please tell the court what your observations have been of Captain Lappo as an aircraft commander and as a pilot?" Bachtell began, "First of all, I will refer to an operation, which I commanded at Goose Air Base in Labrador in 1957. I had the B-47s up there...in support of SAC USCM...I had an airplane that was damaged...we cut off the wing tip, to rid it of the torn metal. At this time, I had most of the un-highly qualified crews with me. So, the Wing Commander (back at Lockbourne) had to select somebody to come and get the airplane. He selected Captain Lappo to do this, because of his professional ability as a pilot...He flew the airplane back without incident. Second I refer you to Operation Home Run...the third instance...Operation Weather Stop...and the fourth and last item...was a proposed trip around the world...over the poles...with approximately 5 or 6 air refuelings, nonstop. And I had planned to send 3 crews. I had chosen Captain Lappo, Major Burkhart, and Major Comerford..." The defense continued, "...did you have any occasion to question his reliability?" Bachtell, as though he sensed Lappo would one day join other pilots only of the elite kind, those enshrined in air museums around the country, said this in response: "As far as I'm concerned I would like to make a real strong statement in regards to ability and, particularly, in Captain Lappo's case, because of his ability which I feel is a bit unique over and above the rest of us, he has been able to maintain our careers and our proficiency line by averageability. I have followed, I don't know whether you Gentlemen are familiar with it or not, I followed the career of General Doolittle; lots of people called him lots of names; but he, by far, contributed more to aviation, and the Air Force, from the cockpit, than any man that I know, and I personally compare Captain Lappo's type of flying ability with this man."

It was a few minutes after 5p.m. (1709 hours to be precise), on that Monday afternoon when the jury returned their findings and the President of the court-martial, Col. Clyde B. Kelsay, read the sentence: "Captain Lappo, it is my duty as president of this court to inform you that the court in closed session and

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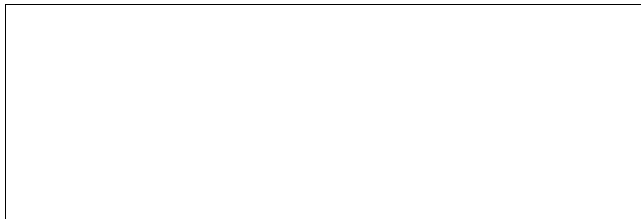
upon secret written ballot, two-thirds of the members present at the time the vote was taken concurring, sentences you to be reprimanded and to forfeit \$50.00 per month for six months.” With the trial at his back, Lappo wasn’t thinking about what Kay was preparing for dinner that night, although she weighed very heavily on his mind. His honor, his reputation and the reputation of his loving wife and five children had also been on trial, or so he had thought.

Kay greeted him with loving arms when he returned home that evening, reassuring him that he was her “knight in shining armor.” But he wouldn’t sleep well that night, or the next, or the next. He was a pilot, but he wasn’t allowed to fly. He had to get the okay of a flight review board before he could ever fly for the Air Force again, but the harsh written reprimand handed down to him from the Commanding General of the Eighth Air Force, Lt. Gen. W.C. Sweeney, Jr., although only a mere formality resulting from the court-martial, was sufficiently damaging for an independent review board to deny his request. Who was going to defy a Lieutenant General?

Crushed, but not broken, Lappo appealed to the hierarchy of the Air Force year after to year in hopes of being reinstated as a pilot, to once again serve his nation aloft rather than on

the ground. But in the end, it was that urge of adventure that some men have, and some don’t to climb mountains, mush dogs to the north pole, and fly airplanes under bridges that caused John Lappo’s serenity in the sky, at least while flying for the United States Air Force, to come to an abrupt halt.

Colonel Lappo and Kay continue to live in Eagle River, Alaska. And over the many years here, John has taken several planes aloft, most fondly his Cessna 185 and his trusty Super Cub. Up above where the eagles fly, above the mountains high, over the open tundra and beyond Mt. McKinley, just him, his plane and the serenity that only pilots have come to know. From aloft he’s watched the caribou roam, the orcas and belugas swim the Pacific Ocean, up Cook Inlet and into Resurrection Bay. He’s seen the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) up close and personal from time to time, but it’s this one thing he dreams more than any other - “will I ever get the chance to fly under the Golden Gate Bridge at night, or the ‘Big Mac’ - just one more Stratojet flight?”



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