

## ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 45

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

MARCH 2005

## Doing the Charleston! President's Column

Yep, it's that time again! The dates are firm, the place is decided, and the program is taking shape. Mark your calendar to attend the Tenth 307<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing B-47/KC-97 Association Standup in Charleston, SC, from 23-27 April 2006. Our Reunion Chairman, Flip Latham, has put in a lot of time, effort and legwork to make sure we have a super deal at our hotel, an intriguing list of tour possibilities and an ideal mix of activities and "hanging out" time. See his article in this newsletter for a rundown of what lies in store. As my yuppie kids say, "If you ain't there, you're square!"

Thanks to the payoff from some changes we made earlier and the bountiful generosity of our members, the Association's financial position has stabilized nicely. (See Treasurer Tony Minnick's financial report in this issue.) The biggest boost comes from savings in newsletter costs, the largest single outlay. A significant number of members have elected to receive their newsletter electronically and I'd like to make a pitch for more of you to adopt that option. Each newsletter that we can send to your computer saves us the cost of printing and mailing. If you like to have paper to hold and read, you can always print out all or any part of the newsletter at home, a modest inconvenience that pays big dividends for the financial health of your Association.

We recognize that many of our members prefer the newsletter in hard copy and the Association officers are pledged to retain this option for those who want it. We'll try to avoid a subscription fee as long as our balance sheet will support it. For the present, we just ask the computer-comfortable among you to help out by switching to the paperless newsletter. See the "Around the Wing" column in this issue for more tips about getting your newsletter from the website.

Please note that I've changed my e-mail address to [petetodd@adelphia.net](mailto:petetodd@adelphia.net). This will improve my ability to send and receive files over a high-speed network and allow hassle-free e-mails to multiple addressees. Please let me hear from you with your ideas for ways we can make the Association even better.

Wendy and I wish you and your families an enjoyable and healthy summer.

Pete Todd

### Back in Touch

**William H Filpula**, 3107 State St,  
Butte, MT 59701.

**Edward F Seagraves**, PO Box 1605,  
Templeton, CA 93465.

### Donations

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

Mary J Ashton  
Don R Brandt  
Ivens Buchanan  
Laurie A Bunten  
Hugh Dell  
Louis R Durham  
Roland L England  
Karol Franzyszen  
D E Finn  
William P Johnson  
James L Kent  
John D Malcolm, Jr  
Bernard C Manning  
Laurence Mau  
William E Novetzke  
Albert F Opitz  
Lou Paller  
Henry L Paulin  
Joseph J Verteramo  
James G Watt

### 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.

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

### Officers of the Association:

**President:** Pete Todd, 1250 Big Valley Dr, Colorado Springs, CO 80919-1015. Phone 719-531-5874. Email: petetodd@adelphia.net.

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

**Secretary:** Larry Boggess, 4304 Ridgecrest Dr, Colorado Springs, CO 80918. Phone 719-548-8024. Email: larryjan@att.net

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

### Association Founders:

Billy Williams, 5546 Enterprise Drive, Lincoln, NE 68521. Phone 402-438-6061. Email: wjwbdw@juno.com

Betty C Pelletier, deceased 29 November 2004.

**The Association is strongly reliant upon key members who have volunteered their time and effort to keep the wheels running smoothly. They are:**

**Membership:** Jan Boggess, 4304 Ridgecrest Dr, Colorado Springs, CO 80918. Phone 719-548-8024. Email: larryjan@att.net

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

**Co-Historian:** Robert Loffredo, 6004 SW 2nd St, Des Moines, IA 50315. Phone 515-285-3445. Email: mustang51c@mchsi.com

**Co-Historian:** Ernie Pence, 2001 A St, Schuyler, NE 68661. Phone 402-352-3311. Email: Ernie\_Pence@cargill.com

### Charleston 2006 Reunion Chairman:

**Jarvis "Flip" Latham**, 1424 Woodlawn Ave, Columbia, SC 29209-1433. Phone 803-776-4294. Email: K4JHL@earthlink.net.

The Association is a non-profit Veterans Organization. All contributions to the organization are gratefully received, but presently are not deductible under IRS Code. The President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer are elected by majority vote of all members at each business meeting.

## Around the Wing

In the last issue we featured an article about World War I pilot **Colonel Ralph G. Vaughan**. Since then, additional items of interest about Col Vaughan have come to light. A careful reading of our wing's history revealed that he was Commander of the 307<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing in February 1955, preceding Cols Ernest C Hardin and Louis G Thorup. He was also a Founding Member of the Order of Daedalians, which is the fraternity of military pilots. The Daedalians were formed at Randolph AFB in 1934 by a group of former World War I pilots in order to promote military airpower.

### Rob Branting, LAFB historian, updates us on the status of the base:

The physical state of Lincoln AFB is looking unknown, at least for the 25 year airport plan presented last month. A website is provided here...[www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/index.htm](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/index.htm) (Click the Airport West link for details).

According to the meeting, plans are to divert NW 48th Street (The main artery that comes in from the south to the western edge of the base before housing) to NW 46th Street, a small jaunt to the east. "K" Avenue, now NW 39th Street, will connect via an overpass to West "O" street within 25 years. Huskerville will be developed in the near term with a road extending from there wrapping around base housing to the new developments to the south. Lincoln Parks and Recreation is to abandon their Air Park West center (Base Gymnasium), its future is unknown, but due to proximity to NW 46th Street and the possible new development there, it is hard to know what will happen. Further east, a new light-rail system has been proposed by the Airport Authority inside of the former base across Oak Creek. To my knowledge, no more buildings have been demolished this year.

The biggest news concerns the departure of the Goodyear Global Distribution Center (GDC) from the two main hangars. The large "Goodyear" lettering, after standing over the buildings since the 1970's has been removed in the past week. Its future is unknown as well, but rumors are that Duncan Aviation, Lincoln's big aviation company, is looking to take up the lease there. Rob also reports that Bowling Lake is to be dredged out in 2006.

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Bowling Lake again moves to occupy our current interest. In our previous issue we published a photo of the 1958 unveiling of a statue of **Captain Russ Bowling**, for whom the lake is dedicated. In the photo the participants were all identified except for an unnamed colonel.

Well, that colonel turns out to be none other than **Lou Weber**, the talented individual who sculpted the statue. Sorry Lou, we just didn't get the info in time for our previous publication. The article also urged anyone who knows of the whereabouts or fate of the statue to fill us in.



Shown just after the unveiling of a bronze statue of Capt. Russell R. Bowling at the dedication ceremonies of Bowling Lake. (left to right, Brig. Gen. Perry M. Hoisington II, former 818th Air Division Commander, Mrs. Mary Joyce Bowling, widow, Mr. Bowling, brother, Mrs. Leon T. Bowling, mother of the late Captain Bowling, Robert and Rebecca, the Captain's children, and "Jingles" Devine, well-known show business personality.)

As a result of this appeal, **Tony Minnick** received a wonderful letter from **Mary Bowling Ashton**, Russ Bowling's widow, which offered the most plausible explanation for what happened to the statue. Her letter, along with a mini-bio of Russ are published elsewhere in this issue. Mary also provided another photo taken of the unveiling, which appears above.

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### Army environmental researcher seeks LAFB information:

Looking for anyone who used the Lincoln AFB ammo demolition range north of the weapons storage area. This includes the 34th ADS/MMS, EOD, or any other units. Contact Ron Plante, USACE Rock Island, (800) 792-5069 ext 5184, or (309) 794-5184 or Ronald.G.Plante@usace.army.mil

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### Here's one for the UFO people (courtesy of R T Boykin, Jr)

UFO Lore

Case Directory

Radar Visual: Hynek Case RV-7

Lincoln Air Force Base, Nebraska

February 13, 1957

On February 13, 1957, a challenging Radar-Visual case occurred at Lincoln Air Force Base, in Nebraska. The Blue Book summary reads:

Objects were visually observed by three control operators and by the Director of Operation, who was in town to supervise a wing mission. Objects were also observed on radar by the NCOIC and GCA operation (two separate radar installations). The objects were observed for a period of three to five minutes. The individual objects were about five to six miles behind an airliner and moving twice as fast. . . . One of the objects broke in two and another made a 180-degree turn. All observers were interrogated by IFF with no response. Visual estimation of the size of the objects was impossible, but the radar operator stated that the blip on his scope was about the same size as that received from a B-47. The objects appeared to stand still and then speed up and rush away. Blue Book, applying its standard theorem, evaluated the sighting, "probable balloon" and "probable aircraft." THE UFO EXPERIENCE: A SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY, Dr. J. Allen Hynek.

*Ed Note: OK, does anyone know anything about this sighting? The above Blue Book Summary seems to lack some coherence...could it be a fraud? Blue Book was the Air Force UFO investigative project run out of the Foreign Technology Division at Wright-Patt. By now the whole world knows we are keeping the Little Green Men alive in Hangar 5 at Wright-Patt.*

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**Pete Shaughnessey** thinks this might be interesting to our B-47 guys. The Mighty 8th Air Force Museum is at Pooler, GA, just North of Savannah on I-95. Not too many planes but more about people and crews during WWII. Beautiful memorial garden including a neat replica of an English Chapel. Some good and touching, film presentations of B-17 missions too. Anyone passing by on the way to the 2006 reunion in Charleston should consider a visit.

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**Louis R Durham**, 811-B White Horse Pike, Oaklyn, NJ 08107-1223, was one of our crew chiefs from 1960 to 1964. He earnestly desires to obtain a 307<sup>th</sup> wing patch. If you

have one to spare, please think of him.

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Our history document, available for downloading on the website, contains a partial list of our crew chiefs and the tail numbers of their aircraft. Lately we have received a number of corrections, new names, and new tail numbers. Unfortunately, it is not possible to change the list embedded in the history doc until we publish an entire new edition. To work around this problem, and enable us to update the list, a stand alone crew chief list has been prepared and is published in a PDF file that you can download from the Events Page.

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Many of us were members of the **Society of SAC**, which was disestablished several years ago amid much controversy, revolving around what used to be known as the SAC Museum near Omaha. Many looked forward to its publication, The Klaxon, and to the annual reunions. A number of dedicated SAC types have picked up the ball and have held two biannual reunions without the backing of a formal association. Well, working out of the Retired Activities Office at Barksdale AFB, they are now laying the groundwork to form a new SAC Association. Stay tuned, and we'll bring you any definitive news when we get it.

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Sons and Daughters Department: **Frank Kisner**, formerly of the 424<sup>th</sup> BS, tells us his son, Brig Gen (select) Frank J Kisner, USAF, has been reassigned from Pope AFB to PACAF in Hawaii, where he will be XP (Director of Plans). Before Pope, Frank had been associated with AF Special Forces Command at Hurlburt AFB; he and his C-130 crew were awarded the 1997 McKay Trophy for their role in evacuation of threatened civilians during one of the wars in Africa.



Frank Kisner, Wing Commander at Pope AFB, receives a drying towell after the traditional wet-down celebrating his last flight at Pope.

Lt Col John B Taylor, USAF, Beale AFB, informed us of the recent passing of his dad, Lt Col **John B Taylor**, USAF Ret. JB, as he was known, was Squadron Navigator for the 424<sup>th</sup> BS, and was last with us at the Fort Worth reunion.

**Good Lady Down.** We were all shocked in late November when we learned of the death of our Association's Co-Founder, **Betty Pelletier**. Betty was with us and in fine fettle in Las Vegas, and

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we all looked forward to seeing her in Charleston. Unfortunately, that is not to be. Betty has had minor cardiac difficulties in the past five years, but seemed to overcome them all. She was struck down by a heart attack followed by a stroke in early November. Betty will be missed.

We must also note that our Co-Historian, **Ernie Pence**, recently lost his wife, Genelle, to cancer after a valiant fight. Genelle and Ernie, together, enjoyed life to its fullest!

The obituary of **Ashley N Denton, Jr** was sent to us by **Dale Christians**. Col Denton was a former deputy commander of the 307<sup>th</sup> and was later commander of LAFB's missile wing. His ancestors have a strong Texas historical background as revealed in portions of the obituary below.

He attended Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tenn, and the University of Texas... served as a bomber pilot in WW II in Italy and Germany. He flew over 30 missions over Germany in a B-24 Bomber. Following, the war, during the peacetime, he flew the P-51 aircraft... attended the Staff War College in Arlington, Va. in 1961 and the following year he served as Deputy Commander of 307th SAC Bomber Wing of Lincoln, Neb., during the Cuban missile crisis. He was a Command Pilot of the B-47 aircraft, accumulating over 5,000 flying hours in various aircraft throughout his service. He was honorably discharged in 1968 from Randolph AFB, where he began his career. He was awarded the European Air Medal and the National Defense Service Medal with the Battle Service Star among other distinguished medals and theatre ribbons.

COL Denton was a member of all old and distinguished Texas family. His great-grandfather was Captain John B. Denton, soldier, Methodist minister and attorney. Captain Denton was killed in 1841 in the Battle of Village Creek during an engagement with hostile Indians. The City and County of Denton, Texas were named in his honor. His grandfather, Ashley N. Denton, M.D., served in the Confederate Forces during the War Between the States, was a member of the 13th Texas Legislature, Director of the State Hospital in Austin and a prominent Austin physician.

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The Last Flights of members are also posted on our website when we become aware of their deaths. The list can be found on the Events Page, and usually contains more information than we have room to publish here. Obituary articles from far away can now sometimes be found through the internet, and when we find one or receive one, it is becoming our practice to put excerpts on the website.

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The association's website has had a beneficial effect that we never anticipated when we put it in service. Former 307<sup>th</sup> people, who were unknown to the association, have found us through Googleing for the 307<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing. Over the past year we have picked up about a dozen new members in this fashion. Also, perhaps more poignant, a number of sons and

daughters have found us while researching their father's Air Force service and background. In this manner, Don Linnell, son of **Daren Linnell** (AEMS) recently found us and informed

us of his father's death in 1988.

**K a y a S t a h l i n**, daughter of **Calvin Gail C r a g u n**,

who was a KC-97 AC in the ARS, found us and told us of his passing back in 1972. She also sent the crew photo, shown here,

and wonders if anyone can

identify others in the picture. Kaya and Don, an AF Vet, are now associate members of our organization.

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#### Email Address Lists and the Website

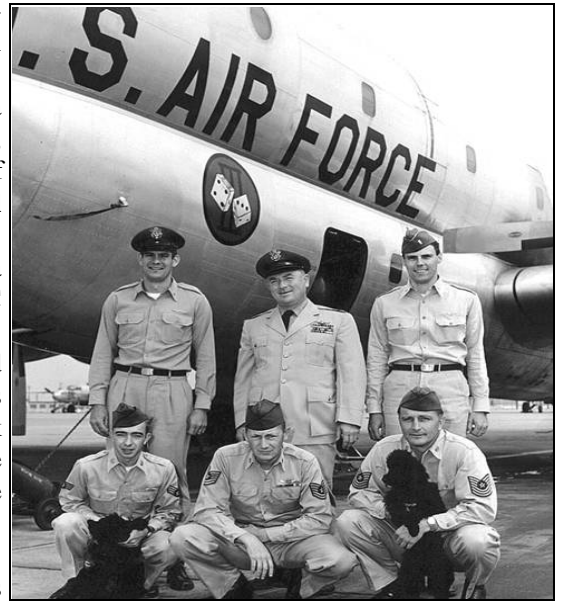
Most of our members have been very faithful to notify us by email whenever they have a change of email address. However, like most things these days, there is a catch!...

If you have previously been a website user and have a password for access to the Newsletter and Events pages, you will be unable to log-in with your new email address. You must log-in with your old address and password. Then, look in the upper right hand corner of the screen and click on "My Account". Doing so will bring up a feature enabling you to change your address and/or password. In short, as far as the website is concerned, you must change your address yourself. For our Site Admin people to change it for you, we would have to take the governing database off-line, make the change and then put it back on line. This entails the risk of disrupting the site while it is off-line.

That said, please continue notifying us by email of your address change as well. We keep a separate list of current addresses that we periodically post for download on the site, so that members can access the addresses of other members. Make sense?

If it doesn't make sense, here comes a more technical explanation...prepare for your eyes to glaze over... When the website first went on the air in early 2003, the governing database in the website, called the Registration Database, was preloaded with whatever names and email addresses the Association had on file at that time. This facilitated recognition of existing Association members when they first accessed the new website,

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and made their obtaining a password virtually automatic. However, over time, many members have changed their email addresses one or more times. This has resulted in the Registration List not being current for those not using password access to the site, and thus being unreliable as a source of addresses for all members.

Realizing that the above may be more confusing than helpful, if you encounter problems, just tell us, and we'll fix it or tell you how to fix it.

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#### Newsletter Delivery from the Website

Picking up from Pete Todd's comments in his column, if you want to get your newsletter off the website, rather than through the mail, just send an email note to that effect to Jan Boggess at "larryjan@att.net". If you are using a broadband connection it should download in 15 to 30 seconds. With dialup, it will take two to three minutes. The download will be in Adobe PDF format, which you can either save to your hard drive, or print directly. To get the download, you must have the free Adobe Reader software on your computer, which you can get by following the links at the bottom of the Newsletters Page. Before you send an email to Jan, we recommend you have established password access to the Newsletter and Events Pages. The bonus for getting it off the website is you will receive it in glorious color!

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#### 307<sup>th</sup> Memories DVD Production

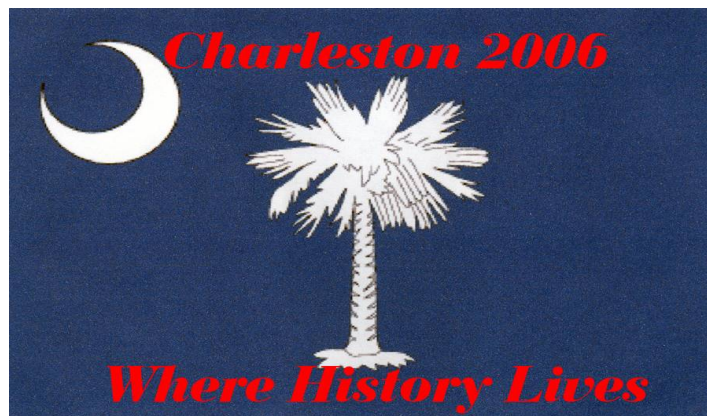
R. T. Boykin, Jr. is making a 307<sup>th</sup> memories DVD, using copies of photos, videos, audios etc, taken during our time at LAFB. He is looking for any and all activities – photos taken at work, play, unit functions, reflex, alert, the club, Parker's Steak House, Gold's, downtown main street, your neighborhood, base housing block party, Halloween, Christmas, Little League, ... anything that will help tell the story of the 307<sup>th</sup> at Lincoln. The DVD will be a combination of video clips and photos.

Please send anything that you think will help make the DVD entertaining and interesting. Should you send something you want returned, please so state, and it will be copied and returned. With each photo and video please include information in writing or on cassette audio that explains the situation and include information such as date, unit, names of people & places. You can send your contributions to: R. T. Boykin, Jr.; 832 Shady Glen Ln.; Bedford, TX 76021-4335 or email at [dru\\_rt92@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dru_rt92@sbcglobal.net).

Time is of the essence! R T intends to put on his Stephen Spielberg hat and go into production in 30 days or so.

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Other members heard from recently include Chaplain George Kendall, Don Linnell, Dale Christians, Fred DiMeo Jr, Fred Bennett, Charlie Watkins, Frank Medrick, Gene Aenbacher, Frank Kisner, Joe Rosario, Don Ivie, Gerald Berger, George Davis, Laurie Buntin, Pete Shaughnessy, and Richard Amenell.



#### Charleston 2006 - The Tenth Standup!

Make your plans for the Tenth 307<sup>th</sup> B-47/KC-97 Bomb Wing Association Stand-Up in Charleston, SC. The dates have been set---**Sunday 23 April through Thursday 27 April 2006**, and the contracts are being signed as this is written.

We'll be headquartered at the Clarion Hotel near the Charleston International Airport, where our attendees will be able to check in three days early or stay three days after the event for the reunion rate of \$79.00 per night. We think you'll be very pleased with this hotel, and you can see it for yourself by taking a virtual tour through it on the web at [www.clarioncharleston.com](http://www.clarioncharleston.com). They offer us some very nice amenities including:

- Complimentary hot breakfast buffet;
- Shuttle service between the airport and hotel;
- Shuttle service to restaurants;
- Free RV parking at the hotel (but no hookups are available on premises).

There are many possibilities for off-campus activities being considered; some of the more prominent include:

- Charleston historic tour and tour of The Citadel, including the Citadel Museum;
- A visit to the Charleston Market and lunch in Old Market area restaurants (and from there it's an easy walk to Waterfront Park.);
- A Charleston Harbor tour including tour of Ft. Sumter;
- Harbor tour only;
- Charleston Harbor and Cooper River Dinner cruise;
- Ft. Moultrie tour;
- Tour and lunch at Charleston AFB, home of the 437<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing (C-17s and C-141s);
- A visit to Magnolia Plantation and its Gardens.( This 60-acre blackwater cypress and tupelo swamp with wildflowers, bog plants, and native and exotic shrubs, is accessible via boardwalks, bridges and dikes with views of waterfowl, alligators and other wildlife.);
- Patriot's point Naval and Maritime Museum - Home of the famous WWII aircraft carrier Yorktown, submarine Clamagore, destroyer Laffey, Coast Guard cutter Ingham, and the Medal of Honor Museum. Vintage military aircraft and

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weapons are on display;

- The South Carolina Aquarium, located on Charleston's harbor, depicts the aquatic habitats of the state from mountain streams through rivers, lakes and the salt marsh, to the depths of the Atlantic Ocean;

- Charleston Museum, the oldest museum in America.

So, you can see that there are a lot things to see and do in what has been called "The Holy City." To learn more details about Charleston, you can visit the official Charleston website at [www.charlestoncvb.com](http://www.charlestoncvb.com). As our plans evolve, look for more information here and on our association's website. Let me know your comments and suggestions by email at [K4JHL@earthlink.net](mailto:K4JHL@earthlink.net).

Our reunion logo seen above reflects history and is based on the state flag of South Carolina as officially adopted in 1861. It has a white crescent moon and a white palmetto tree on a blue ground. Three white crescent moons (on a blue background) were first used on a South Carolina banner protesting the Stamp Act in 1765. In 1775, Colonel William Moultrie designed a banner for South Carolina troops; it had a white crescent moon on a blue field. When South Carolina seceded from the Union, the palmetto tree was added to the flag. The palmetto tree was chosen because this tree had helped South Carolinians defeat the British in a battle at Sullivan's Island near Charleston, during the Revolutionary War. The South Carolinians built a fort out of palmetto wood, and when the British fired cannonballs at the fort, instead of knocking the fort down, the soft palmetto wood just absorbed the cannonballs.

Jarvis H "Flip" Latham



## Russ Bowling - From Mary Bowling Ashton

Dear Tony,

The 307th Bomb Wing Association Newsletter arrived a few days ago and I was pleasantly surprised to see the picture of the dedication of Bowling Lake with Andy Devine and Russ' two children, Robert and Rebecca, unveiling the statue of Russ. The Colonel to the left is Lou Webber.

A few years back the CEO of the Lincoln Airport contacted me regarding the statue. If memory serves me correctly they wanted it to place in Bowling Park. At that time I got in touch with Lou and we tried to locate the statue. It had never been bronzed so when the Base closed so many years later those in charge may not have realized its significance and it is believed it was probably buried. No one we contacted had any idea where it went.

A short time later I had the opportunity to be passing through Lincoln, and Mr. Andersen, I believe his name was, and who was about to retire from the job with the airport, took me on a tour of the old base and past the sign that designates it as Bowling Park.

As usual I read the newsletter completely and was surprised to see the reference to Sgt. Bob Conway. Bob was on Russ' crew when they crash-landed in England during WWII. He and Annabell lived with us a short time when he thought pastures looked greener in Dallas than where they were living. While there he signed up with a Guard unit at the Naval Air Station in Dallas. The first day of the four-day Dedication of the Lake opening, Bob grabbed me and gave me a hug as I arrived at the dedication area. I believe that may be the last time I saw Bob. As we had lost track of each other I did not learn of his death for sometime after it happened. If anyone knows where Annabell is I would appreciate having her address.

I am sending along a collection of memories of Russ that I put together for my children some time ago. I will always remember the devilish twinkle he could get in his eye.

Sincerely,  
Mary Bowling Ashton

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<b>Treasurer's Report</b>			
<b>307<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing B-47/KC-97 Association</b>			
<b>Ending Balance from last report October 21, 2004:</b>		<b>\$5,492.36</b>	
	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Deposits</u>	
<b>General Fund Balance</b>			<b>\$5492.36</b>
Expenses:			
USPS Annual Fee	150.00		
Admin/Equip/Supplies	214.18		
Postage	267.80		
Printing	<u>605.77</u>		
	<b>1237.75</b>		<b>-1237.75</b>
			<b>4254.61</b>
Income:			
Donations		1111.00	
Interest on account		<u>4.23</u>	
		<b>1115.23</b>	<b>+ 1115.23</b>
<b>Ending Balance February 28, 2005</b>			<b>5369.84</b>
<b>Tony Minnick, Treasurer</b>			

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### **Russell Roy Bowling**

Russell Bowling was born in the little town of Goose Creek, TX In 1945 Goose Creek, Pelican ("Pelly") Junction and Baytown incorporated into the city of Baytown, a suburb of Houston. He was the middle child of five children of Sarah and Leon Bowling. When he was three years old the family moved to Gause, TX, where he grew up and went to school. He graduated from Hearne HS in 1940 with plans to attend Texas A&M. Although WW2 had not started, the US Govt. was preparing to initiate the draft. It appeared possible he would be drafted, so on the day after his 18th birthday he enlisted in the Army as a private and was assigned to the field artillery at Fort Sam Houston, TX . Those were the good old days when a new private received \$21 a month and room and board.

All through childhood Russ had dreamed of becoming a pilot. He wrote many school papers about flying. That dream came true in January 1942. Shortly after WW2 started, they relaxed the requirements that student pilots be college graduates or at least have some college and he applied and was accepted into flight school. Eight months later he received his Pilots Wings and was promoted to Staff Sergeant. He was assigned to Ft Myers, FL and training in the twin engine B-26 "Marauder" Bomber.

#### **This is from "Tales of Flying with Russ" as told by Norman Hoxie, his Radio Operator**

"Russ had a wonderful sense of humor that helped us during difficult days of training and even into combat."

" The crew was fully aware of the many crashes of the B-26 Marauder when we started our training at Avon Park, FL in 1943. It was known as the "Widow Maker" for its reputation for "One a day in Tampa Bay". The fact that some of the flights would be in the short winged early models added to our anxiety. We had made only a few flights when an emergency bail out procedure arrived from Wing Headquarters with the following instructions: The pilot will ring the bail out bell and repeat jump over the intercom three times. As they prepared for their next flight the tail gunner, Bob Conway, asked if Russ would use the procedure and Russ replied "Certainly I will, but you better go out on the first "jump" if you want to hear the other two".

"On one of our flights to Lake Charles, LA, Russ was unable to get clearance back to Avon Park, but was given permission for a flight into Texas. He flew over Houston, one of his crew's hometown, and then on to his family farm home near Hearne. Three times he flew low over the backyard, his Mother and Father watching from the porch. A mule driven wagon was directly on course. The noise of a Marauder is enough to scare even a mule but on the third pass, when the driver saw us coming his way; he jumped off the wagon and took off across the field. After reaching safer altitude on the way back to Lake Charles, Russ said over the intercom, "Gee, fellows it sure seemed good to get home

again". Back at Lake Charles, Russ asked me how low I thought the plane was over the back yard. The radio operator said he was unable to guess the altitude at the speed they were going, however he did have to look up to see Russ' Mother and Father on the porch!"

"July 14th, 1943 the crew received orders to go by rail to Hunter Field to get their new bomber. They were surprised to see their names and rank stenciled on the outside of the fuselage just below the position they would fly."

" In the movies when servicemen leave for overseas duty, friends and relatives are there to see them off. It may be good theater but it doesn't work that way, at least in our case. The only person to see us off was a disgruntled sergeant who had to work on Sunday. Shouting at Russ he said, "Don't start those engines until I tie down this B-25 or you'll blow it off into the ocean".

"They flew to New Castle, DE. There the enlisted men had to spend the night in the guardhouse to make sure they wouldn't reveal their destination. Presque, MA was the last stateside stop. Two nights were spent in Goose Bay, Labrador before the critical flight to Greenland. Four nights were spent there before going on to Iceland, where they spent two more nights. Prestwick, Scotland was the last flying for about a month and never again in their bomber. The bomber was to remain in Scotland out of the war zone until it was needed."

"After having flown three missions our crew was selected for an unusual flight. We were taken by truck to one of the other Marauder Groups to fly a "jinx" bomber to North Ireland so trainees could practice in it. It was not to be flown again. None of the pilots would fly it because of its many problems! If anybody could fly that crate, it would be Russ. Before take off Russ and I were walking around the bomber and looking it over. "I think we'll get it off the ground," Russ said. He did, but had more help than we could give him. The Martin Company did a foolish thing in making this model; it had no copilots seat or controls. On take off the flaps would not stay down and the pilots seat slid back. One of the gunners pushed against the seat to hold it, but even so Russ could only touch the pedals with his toes. The plane missed a radio tower by about thirty feet but from then on things went a little better and we arrived at our destination. There was never any explanation why we were left in Ulster for nearly a month."

This ends the story as Norman Hoxie had told it and I will continue with my narrative of Russ's life, with some excerpts from a newspaper before we met and best recollections of things he told me.

Excerpts from an old newspaper article:

TEXAS AIR OFFICER DECORATED with DFC at Beaumont Hospital "For extraordinary achievement while serving as a pilot of a B-26 on missions over occupied Europe ----Lt. Bowling displayed steadfast devotion to duty and keen profes-

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sional skill on these missions, many of which were dispatched under hazardous conditions and against heavily defended enemy positions. His superior flying skill and tireless energy reflects great credit on himself and the Armed Forces of the US," the citation continued.

" It was on May 7th, 1944 Lt. Bowling was flying his 47th Marauder mission over the European Continent, this time, some 12000 feet over Dieppe, a burst of flack smashed into his plane. It hit everywhere. Small particles of the Nazi 88 projectile speckled the crew with bloody scars. The plane sustained major damage. Lt. Bowling discovered his hydraulic system was gone. The electrical system had gone haywire. The right throttle was out and its engine beyond control. The left engine limped along on half power".

"Somehow he managed to regain control of the plane and swung back across the English Channel. The Cliffs of Dover flashed beneath him as, losing altitude fast, he searched for an emergency landing field, meanwhile struggling to lower his left landing wheel which obstinately refused to budge. The field appeared. The plane side slipped in crazily."

"Then at the last instant, as the crew braced themselves for the crash landing, a British Spitfire came into his vision--directly in the path of the crippled plane. Lt. Bowling pushed savagely his throttles. The Marauder hedge-hopped the Spitfire and twisted even more crazily to one side, smashing completely through one building and into a second."

"Lt. Bowling walked away from the wreck, blood streaming from his mangled face. His co-pilot walked away with a broken arm. All his crew sustained bruises. His plane fell apart when they tried to extract it from the building." End of article. *(Bob Conway, later of the 307<sup>th</sup>, was on Russ's crew in this crash)*

When the crew took their plane and started for combat in Europe, the Navigator was the only Officer on the crew. Russ was called a "Flying Sergeant". In the ten months of combat he received two promotions, first to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. and then to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt.

About the crash in England, Russ told me, when they had reached friendly territory, he had offered the crew the option of bailing out or remaining with the plane. Their reply was, "What are you going to do Chief?" When he replied he was going to take it in. To a man they said "We're with you". His plan was to circle as much as he could to bum off fuel. He would then slow the plane enough to "ground loop" it as it hit the ground. This would save as much of the plane as he possible. Had he not had to increase the throttle to hedge-hop the Spitfire this may have succeeded. There was not enough fuel remaining and the condition of the plane prevented them from trying to "go around".

Because of the injuries Russ sustained he spent six months at William Beaumont General Hospital in El Paso. TX. During that time the bone fragments were removed from the frontal sinus area and a metal plate about the size of a silver dollar was put in his forehead. He had numerous plastic surgeries.

Immediately after the crash Russ had double vision and was told he would always have it. He determined that would not be and he did eye exercises faithfully and eventually overcame that problem.

When he was ready to be released from the hospital, he was offered a full Medical Discharge. He refused this as long as he could return to full flying status. As the war in the South Pacific was still in progress and pilots were still needed, his request was granted and he served for a time as an instructor at bases in Texas and Oklahoma. In Nov 1945, when Russ and I met, he was flying C-47 cargo planes out of Lowery Field in Denver and I was working at St. Lukes Hospital.

The following June we learned Russ was being transferred to Stockton, CA. I quit my job and we were married. We had hoped I could go with him wherever he might go. Shortly after our arrival at the Post in Stockton, Russ received orders to Greensboro, NC. We knew he would be going overseas with the occupation forces. We were elated because we felt he would be going to the European Theater.

Wrong! Shortly after our arrival in NC, he received orders to go by troop train to San Francisco, with Guam as his final destination. We were assured there would be housing so I could join him in about six weeks. That six weeks extended into three months and again, another three month, etc. After ten months we decided he would separate from the service so we could be together. He returned Stateside about a year after we had married.

Before separation from the Army, which it still was at that time, Russ would have a complete assessment of his physical condition to determine if he had any disabilities. He spent a few weeks at Letterman Army Hospital while they ran all sorts of tests. They determined he should receive 75% disability from the VA, which amounted to about \$75 a month. When the hospital released him, we headed for his hometown and civilian life.

Jobs were not plentiful at that time because of all the service people who had gotten out in the early post-war days. One day he read an ad in the Dallas newspaper announcing the test for the fire department. He took the test and when the results came back he had scored the highest. Of course, a physical was required and he traveled to Dallas to take that. We then began the long wait for a reply. When it didn't come, we decided to go to Dallas to see what was holding it up. When Russ walked into the Dr. office, the Dr. looked up and said he had been studying the physical results and was about to notify

*(Continued on page 9)*



*(Continued from page 8)*

Russ he had to turn him down because it would be too much of a liability to the department if he was injured because of his old injuries. Russ told him if that ever happened he would most certainly go back to the Army for any compensation. Russ talked the Dr. into approving him for the Dallas City Fire Department. For five years Russ worked as a fireman for the city of Dallas.

When the Korean War started Russ decided he wanted to go back into what was now the USAF. The love of flying had never left him and he had not been in an airplane since he left the Army. He waived the 75% disability and was put back on flying status. After a refresher course in Malden, MO he was assigned to a B-36 crew at Carswell AFB in Fort Worth, TX. In 1954, just before he transferred for 6 month at AOB school in Waco, TX, the crew he was on was sent to the South Pacific as a back up "trace plane" for the nuclear test at Eniwetok.

Lincoln AFB NE and a Aircraft Commander on a B-47 would be his next assignment. He was always proud of his flying ability and enjoyed flying the B-47 but he had his mind set on eventually being assigned to the B-58, which was being designed at the plant adjacent to the base at Ft. Worth.

In July 1956 the 307<sup>th</sup> Wing departed for three month temporary duty at Lakenheath Royal Air Force Station , England. Russ and his crew left July 5th. July 27th while practicing "touch and go" landings , on the third pass of the six they were scheduled to do, they developed problems and his plane crashed into the ammunition dump. Russ and his three crewmembers died. I will always believe Russ was having his copilot make that "touch and go" and because of a number of conditions ran into trouble. Although, it was determined to be pilot error, I feel certain the hump in the runway was the cause. After the accident they stopped practicing "touch and go" landings on that runway because of that condition.

Among the medals Russ received were the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with seven oak leaf clusters, the Purple Heart and numerous lesser, but never-the-less important medals.

In June 1958, Lincoln AFB honored Russ posthumously with the dedication of Bowling Lake Recreation Area. A statue of Russ presented by a fellow officer was unveiled by Russ' two children, Robert and Rebecca, assisted by Andy Devine, a movie actor of those times. The base personnel had built a chain of little lakes, a picnic area and a large lodge with a fire place. One of the lakes had an island in the center and was large enough for water skiing, but the boats could only circle the island in one direction. At the suggestion of Andy Devine, they had built a lighthouse where the boats came into the boat ramp.

The dedication was a four-day water ski and air show attended by many dignitaries, including the Governor of NE, some prominent Air Force Generals and Lincoln city dignitaries. Since the closure of the Base, the area remains as Bowling Park; a pretty little city park with the area much as it was when it was first dedicated. The Lodge has been torn down. I regret that the statue presented by one of his fellow officers was never bronzed and has been lost.

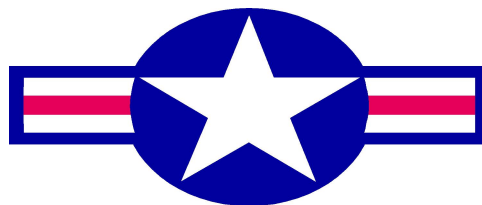
Before Russ left for England, he said three things to me that haunt me to this day. The first was "I don't want to wish my life away, but I wish this TDY was over". Second, there had been two B-47 crashes at the base that spring and Russ said, "I wonder who the third is going to be". Then he said to me, "If you have any premonitions about me when I'm flying, don't tell me". And I was filled with them when he was preparing for that TDY and I didn't have any reason to be.

One day, about that time, out of the blue he said to me, "I believe in a Higher Being". Nothing more was said and I didn't ask why he had said that at that time. We did attend Church at the time, but not regularly and had never really talked about our beliefs. He had grown up in the Southern Baptist Church and his Mother did not want him to change Religions! We had attended various Protestant churches. While in Dallas, Russ had helped with the building of a new Methodist Church in our neighborhood. In Waco, we had attended the Methodist Church his Aunt and Uncle attended. In Lincoln, it was a Lutheran Church, if my memory serves me correctly.

While reading some of Norman Hoxie's writing, I learned that he and the co-pilot, John Nydegger, were both on furlough the day Russ's plane was so shot up and they crashed. (They had been hit many times before, but never like that!) When Norm saw Russ a few years after the war, Russ said "He knew something bad would happen when John and Norm left on furlough". He believed the superstition most flyers had, that bad luck followed when they had crewmembers missing.

Russ did not keep a diary during the war. A great uncle who was in the Civil War did and was killed; so Russ felt it was a bad omen to keep one.

Russ was born to fly and as the Deputy Wing Commander said to me a few days after his death, "If any one had been able to avoid that crash, it was Russ." Also, he did not believe Russ was at the controls when they ran into trouble and that the view from the back seat might have made it more difficult for the co-pilot to judge the hump. Kelly was inexperienced in the B-47 and had been flying the lighter fighter planes, which maneuvered more easily.





### The Last Flight

The verse on the SAC Chapel Memorial Window says it best...

**Irene Biggs**, Albuquerque NM, 18 December 2004.

**Calvin Gail Cragun**, ARS, Las Vegas NV, 13 July 1972.

**Barbara Maria Cragun**, Las Vegas NV, 15 September 1975.

**Ashley Denton**, 307<sup>th</sup> BW Deputy Commander, Marble Falls TX, 23 October 2004.

**Leo J Halpin**, ARS, Santa Monica CA, 9 September 2004.

**Marcy Halpin**, Santa Monica CA, June 1986.

**William V Hamilton**, 372<sup>nd</sup> BS, 27 October 2004.

**Joseph D Hull**, 372<sup>nd</sup> BS, Satellite Beach FL, 23 May 1999.

**Robert B Kelly**, 371<sup>st</sup>, 372<sup>nd</sup> BS, San Francisco CA, 31 December 2004.

**Daren A Linnell**, AEMS, Burkburnett TX, 5 June 1988.

**Daisy I Linnell**, Burkburnett TX, 20 January 1992.

**Betty C Pelletier**, Founder of the 307<sup>th</sup> BW Association, Green Valley AZ, 29 November 2004.

**Genelle Pence**, Schuyler NE, 2 November 2004.

**Ralph M Philbrook**, 372<sup>nd</sup> BS, Redmond WA, 16 August 2004.

**Ginny Strom**, Fair Oaks CA, 7 December 2004.

**John B Taylor**, 424<sup>th</sup> BS, Pensacola FL, 24 October 2004.

**Everett B Thurlow**, ARS, Arundel ME, 14 July 2004.

*And God said who shall we send. I answered I am here, send me." Isaiah 6:8*

## My Journey to the Last B-47, 6244

By James Villa

When did I first get interested in Airplanes? I don't remember but I do remember my first toy airplane. It was a small red plastic P-40 Warhawk that my grandmother bought for me while in a department store in Houston. Over my grade school years I would see airplanes in movies and build model airplanes. I would read anything that was about airplanes and I spent a lot on comic books that had anything to do with airplanes. Whenever we were traveling at night, I would look at airport beacon lights and imagine what was there at the airports. I would watch as distance came between us and their locations.

As I got older, there came several opportunities to go for rides in small civilian airplanes. I couldn't ever get to go to an airshow; the only airshows that I knew of were held at Ellington Field between Houston and Galveston. In those days (early 1950s), that would be an all day trip. During my high school years, I would do reports or essays whenever the reports would be acceptable for the subject requirements. The Wright brothers were my idols then, but now I know that they were not the first to do powered flight. What is true about the Wright brothers, is that they were the first to photograph powered flight.

In the early 50s, the B-36s would be flying a lot over where I lived. The heavy drone of their engines could be heard almost before a person could see them, when the airplanes would pass over our old house, the windows would vibrate. When I would be working in the fields, I would watch the big airplanes until I could not see them anymore. Along about 1955 or 1956, the movie "Strategic Air Command" with Jimmy Stewart and June Allyson came out. It was a must see film and I soaked up every second of the B-36 part. I didn't pay a lot of attention to the B-47 part.

When I graduated from Bellville High School in 1957, I really didn't know what I would want to do. I worked construction during the summer months and when the fall semester at Blinn Junior College at Brenham, Texas started, I fell in with some of my friends and we went to college. I would graduate from Blinn and then transfer to Texas A&M as a junior. Airplanes had drifted far from my mind.

It didn't work out at A&M. Over the years at Blinn, I had changed my major field of studies. At A&M, I realized that the playing field was more complex. I didn't have it -I failed chemistry. What was worse, I was out of money and had a small size of debt.

I decided to drop out of A&M for the spring semester and go back in the next fall. I got a job and was doing fairly well, then I did what many had done. I bought another car and a large amount of what I was making was going into it.

Time passed by and before I knew it, the fall semester was there. I decided to further delay going back to college until the spring semester. Also a certain girl came into the picture... you have heard this one before. Later on when I went into the Air Force, I thought that she would wait for me, but she didn't.

Lo, and behold, I lost my college deferment. The draft board had reclassified me IA and sure was becoming interested in me. It was then I decided to volunteer for the Air Force, I was back on track thinking about airplanes.

I wanted to be a turret gunner, mainly because of an old war movie. One of the turret gunners always carried a camera with him and was always taking pictures. I never gave it any thought that I would have to shoot at someone.

When I reported for enlistment, I was told that there wasn't any need for gunners. It

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was at this time I chose aircraft or missile maintenance. Later at Lackland, I narrowed my choice to aircraft maintenance.

When arriving at aircraft mechanic school at Amarillo AFB, we were given a choice -fighters or bombers, I thought -bigger the better -and went on into bomber mechanic school. After graduation, I would be transferred to Lincoln AFB, Nebraska.

When I arrived at Lincoln AFS, I would be assigned to the 307th Maintenance Squadron. While being processed in, I would be selected to stay in the orderly room and work under T/Sgt Maynard Reece. I was only supposed to work in the records section for two weeks and then go onto the flight line. Another man had been selected (he volunteered) to stay in the orderly room for six weeks but he had a medical problem and was discharged. I would assume his position and still be under Sergeant Reese's supervision.



Photo from Jim Rusher, taken from an Air Force Museum postcard of 1960s vintage. This shows 6244 in the old Museum area, before it was expropriated by the Wright-Patt 19th Bomb Wing as a front yard lawn ornament. Note that the 307th BW crest still adorns 6244. The 19th BW later replaced the 307th crest with their own. What Chutzpah!

I continued duty in the orderly room, after the six weeks had passed. The work that I did wasn't that difficult and I could always stay neat. I revised all of the technical orders that we operated on. plus I handled the aircraft forms that would have to be processed. But finally I asked Sgt. Reece if I would be going to the flight line. He said if I wanted to stay in the orderly room, he could see to it. I told him no, I was trained as an aircraft mechanic and I wanted to be with the airplane.

Sergeant Reece was a fine person and sometimes I regretted that I asked to leave. Worse yet, some forty one years later I learned that Sgt. Reece had been murdered by a son-in-law.

I was assigned to "A" section, C flight when arriving on the flight line. I worked with S/Sgt Billy Williams on 0353 on a couple launches and also S/Sgt Harold Morrillo on 2349. I

would also assist S/Sgt Vonzell Carter on 4226.

Everyone, AIC, on down would have to do a tour of three months in the servicing branch. I would work the midnight to eight shift refueling, defueling, towing and positioning B-47s. My crew leader was S/Sgt Armil M. Storms and I would also work with Ernie Pence. With Ernie, there was never a dull moment.

When I returned from the servicing branch, I would again work with different crew chiefs. It wasn't long before the "A" section NCOIC, CMSgt Matthew Pelikan decided to pull me in to take care of the "A" section records. I had choice duty again but now I could see our B-47s sitting right out there in front of our section trailer. I would have to ask again to go out on the flight line. This time it wasn't hard to get a replacement for me, another man was eager to have my job.

I would be assigned to S/Sgt Steven Vensky to continue the training for the five level upgrade. Steve was the assigned crew chief on 6244 so this is where I would first cross path with the airplane. Steve would be promoted to T/Sgt and be moved out of "A" section, S/Sgt Pressley would then become the assigned crew chief. I would help him on 6244, but before long the AICs would be doing a lot of launches. We were becoming short of Staff Sergeants (I don't recall any of our guys being promoted to Staff Sergeant the entire time I was at Lincoln) so it was soon that anyone with a five level could do the launches. A Staff Sergeant could have two or more airplanes assigned to his name even if someone else would maintain and launch the airplanes.

After gaining my five level and promoted to A2C, off to alert I went. I would cross paths with 6244 every once in a while, maybe a regular launch or a tour on alert with the airplane. I don't recall ever doing TDY Reflex with 6244.

I was on alert duty December 64 when I heard that 6244 was being sent to the USAF Museum. I went down to the regular flight line in an alert vehicle by myself. It was early on a Sunday morning just as the sun was coming up when I took the pictures of 6244 that I have on my web site. Sure glad that I did!

In the following January, we cleaned and polished 6244 into immaculate condition. AIC James Sine and I volunteered to work at night on 6244 because everything was quiet then, it took a night each to polish the two wing tanks.

When the 22nd of January 1965 came, A2C Bruce Stufflebeam and I would do the ground preflight. As Captain Hickman took 6244 off, Lt Colonel John Crook, Bruce and I sat in the colonel's car to watch 6244 takeoff for her last time and disappear in the low overcast.

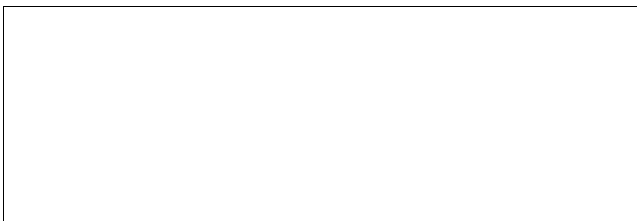
This was my last launch of a B-47, also the last time that I would be on the flight line. I would start clearing base, I was getting out of the Air Force. It is still mind astonishing how this trip to 6244's last days came about, why me?



Cecil Davis and his 372nd BS crew approach their bird, after finalizing mission plans in Base Ops.  
 Photo from Scott Bundy, son of Cecil Davis.



Photo from Dale Christians. The 307th BW contingent at the 1961 bombing competition at 2AF.



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