



TAC Tanker Tales



Volume 11 Issue 3

March 2010

It's 'Almost Show Time' for the Reunion in Amazing Albuquerque

Our response following the Registration forms going out in the last issue, have exceeded our block of 50 rooms at the **Hotel Albuquerque**. We were sent the "pickup list of reservations and already had 60 rooms taken by March 1. There have been 80 guests whose orange forms have come in by that time, too. The latter represents 45 sheets with 80 total people. The hotel gave us fair warning that they are almost full, so if you are shut out call us for an alternative hotel nearby.

An apology for a typo on the **Orange Form** which has confused several readers. On the PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY side at the bottom, I had a \$40 on the Event 9 line. Normally, we only have one price for our banquet and we found our Prime Rib was more expensive, so I put the prices individually next to the entrée choice and FORGOT to drop the upper \$40. If you still have your form, CROSS out that first \$40.

Since this is an even number year and one in which we have our **Business Meeting and Memorial Service**, I was delightfully surprised to find that the Hotel Albuquerque has its own Chapel. We will have a short service there on Saturday afternoon led by Dick Hermans, just before the Business meeting.

Now I would like to introduce our **Host With the Mostest-Dave Scott**, who has written some information for our visit:

Amazing Albuquerque, An Event to Remember

Bienvenidos Albuquerque!! The 2010 TAC Tanker Reunion promises to be a great experience to enjoy the many facets of New Mexico-the Land of Enchantment. New Mexico is the perfect destination for our reunion due to a rich mixture of natural resources, diverse landscapes, a multicultural environment and historical location. As a matter of fact, you may think you have taken a step back in time when you find yourself in the historic Old Town area.

Albuquerque is the largest city in New Mexico and was founded by the Spanish in 1706. The Catholic church and original settlement is in Old Town, which is across the street from the Hotel. The city was named in honor of Spain's Duke of Alburquerque. The first 'r' was mistakenly dropped by the first Post Office (government in action) and it was never returned. The city is know as the "Duke City" since it was named after a Duke and you will see many businesses or references to this title. This is the first history lesson , but it will not be on the test at the end of the Reunion.

New Mexico is one of those forgotten States that has a lot to offer, but few people take the time to explore the fifth largest State with its fascinating culture, breathtaking scenery, mountains, sunny weather and deep blue skies. We have attempted to schedule a variety of events that will showcase some of the highlights of New Mexico. From a tour of Old Town (1706), to a trip to Santa Fe, a major art mecca (founded in 1609), to a Nuclear Museum featuring a B-29, to a flight to Sandia Crest (10,378 ft. above the city, and finally an opportunity to donate money to an to an Indian Pueblo, also known as a Casino, all the Reunion activities promise to (continued on page 2)

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Well **who** caught the editor's boo-boo in the last issue???????????????

It seems that in inserting my clip art in the mast head on page one, I "Cut off the TALES!"

Stuff Happens!!!!

Dave Scott (continued from page 1) be interesting so make your choices and enjoy the Wild West. There is a lot to do and little time to do and see it all. If possible, plan a little extra time to visit more of the unique locations or areas that make New Mexico enchanting.

Our Hotel Albuquerque is located on the West side of Albuquerque, just a few blocks South of I-40. It is about 10 miles from the Airport and 5 miles from the Bus/Santa Fe train Station. If you come by Stagecoach, it stops at the hotel.

Directions by car from North or South on I-25 take Exit 226B and head West towards Gallup to Exit 157 A (Rio Grande Blvd). Head South a few blocks to the Hotel at 800 Rio Grande Blvd. By car from East or West on I-40 take Exit 157A (Rio Grande Blvd) and head South to hotel on left. By train or bus, take a taxi from the station (5 miles-less than 10 min. Fare about \$13.

If flying into ABQ International Sunport, go to lower level baggage claim area (note the unique airport facility).

Rental Cars –exit claim area and cross the first traffic lane to the Rental Car Facility bus stop (leaves every 3-4 minutes). You will go to the Rental Car building where an agent will direct you to your car. Follow exit signs and turn right on University Blvd and turn left at the second traffic light (Sunport Blvd.) towards I-25 North. Turn right to enter I-25N, go about 2 miles and take Exit 226B to I-40 West towards Gallup. Exit I-40 at #157A and go South (left) about 2 blocks.

Shuttle– Go to the Airport Shuttle desk near the Southwest Airlines baggage claim area. The Shuttle will take you to the Hotel, may make other stops. Ticket cost is \$15 for one person, one way or \$20 for two (roundtrip is \$28 for one and \$38 for two people). Advanced reservations may be called in 505-883-4966.

Taxi– Taxi Stand is outside baggage area at the first traffic lane curb. Ride is about 15 minutes and runs about \$25.

City Bus– There is a City bus route at the Airport. If you take the bus let us know how it works, if you get to the Hotel. If not, the Albuquerque Police Department has a great missing persons section.

Cruise Ship- the cruise ship dock is closed indefinitely until water is discovered in New Mexico.

Climatology: In May the average high temperature is 79 degrees and the low is 50 with a relative humidity of 32% or so. Due to the high elevation, the average temperature swing between day and night is 30 degrees. Also, the spring brings some days with strong breezes (winds). In general, for daytime activities dress in layers so you can shed clothing as the day warms up. For evening, plan for cool weather which gets cooler the later it gets. Plan on warm days, but pack some for cool mornings and evenings.

President's Corner by Art Belenzon

I've been doing a lot of thinking lately about the "good ole days" and trying to justify why I can remember that so vividly and I can't remember to zip up. One great thing about the PAST, it's filled with great friends, excitement, a variety of passions and conquests.

I look forward to our reunion in May. It's time to reopen the past with those who shared it with me. It was a time when danger was fun and fun was dangerous. We all have our stories, some we've heard many times and others have yet to be told.

There will be more lines in our faces and a few more canes and walkers required but there will be no less laughter and tears and a lot more "I've heard that one before, but the way it really happened is....."

Looking forward to seeing all of you in Albuquerque. Just to alert you to some business that we will have to take care of at the reunion:
 1-Adoption of changes to our By-Laws.
 2-Designating use of funds if TAC Tanker Association is dissolved.

Maxine and I wish you all well.

ART



Membership Report

by Lou Chapman

New Life Members

- *Stanley L. Allen, Chandler AZ-427, 4505
- *Kirk D. Davis, Bixby OK- 420
- *Robert E. Dorn, Layton UT-431
- *Richard H. Foote, Lansdale PA-427
- *Robert L. Quam, Pine Prairie LA-622, 431
- Robert J. Schleihs, Marinette WI-431
- *William Slay, Nacodoches TX-421
- David W. Thomas, Cary NC-622

New Members*

- Frederick S. Cook, Young America, MN-421
- Dennis E. Finkhouse, No. Miami FL-420
- John Riley, Erwinna PA-622, 431
- George W. Wright, Austin TX-429, 622

Chaplain's Corner

By Pastor George Burrows

WE CAME SOUTH EARLY THIS YEAR! HOPED TO FIND IT WARM AND COZY AND MUCH BETTER THAN THE SNOW COUNTRY. NOT SURE THAT WE ACTUALLY FOUND FLORIDA OR NOT. IN TEN YEARS WE HAVE NOT HAD SUCH A WINTER. I PRAYED EVERY DAY FOR GOOD WEATHER!

I PRAYED, "LORD WHAT'S UP? I HEARD HIM SAY--"WHERE'S YOUR SHOVEL? I SAID, ""I LEFT IT HOME. HE SAID, "HAVE A GOOD WINTER! SO FAR SO GOOD!!! THINK ABOUT IT!



PASTOR
GEORGE

The Board Chairman's Corner

By Bill Wolford

We here in Vermont are getting a little cabin fever and we didn't even get as much snow as a lot of you southern folks. However, Mt Mansfield does have 100 inches on the ground. We just don't happen to be skiers. Let me say again how much we are looking forward to seeing you all at the reunion. The program and outings that Natalie has planned sound like they'll not only be interesting, but a lot of fun. I'm another year older and deeper indebt. Not really.

February was a big month for me. It was the 57th anniversary of my entry into the Air Force and the 37th anniversary of my retirement from the Air Force and my 76th birthday. So all in all it was a busy month. I am back with H&R Block this year on a reduced schedule and enjoy doing taxes. We continue being busy with church and choir and looking after Shirley's 91 year old mother who is doing great. Finally getting rid of the blood clots in my lungs and should be able to come off of the coumadin at the end of March.

Hope all of you are having a good winter wherever you are. Keep praying for our country's leadership. They really need help at this time. Again, full speed ahead, see you in Albuquerque.

Best Regards, Bill

Letters Received From New Members

Stanley Allen of Chandler TX (December 2009)

I retired at Eglin AFB FL as a MSgt with 26 years service on Sept. 1980. Was stationed at Sampson AFB NY, Chanutte AFB IL, Hill AFB UT, Blytheville AFB AR, Warner Robins AFB GA, Langley AFB VA, Clark AFB PI, Westover AFB MA, Beale AFB CA, Utopau AFB Thailand, back to Beale and then Eglin. Currently live in Arizona and restoring a 1938 Ford Tudor Deluxe. I am into antiques and enjoying retirement. Would love to hear from folks I knew who were stationed with me.

Robert L. Quam of Pine Prairie LA (December 2009)

Entered the USAF in August 1954 at Chanutte AFB in the Tech School. To Japan Sept '54-'56 and then to England AFB with the 622nd and KB-29s. In March 1964 to Biggs AFB and the 431st with KB50s. Transferred to George AFB CA in 1965 and back to England in '67, Air Commando Wing-C-123, B-26, AIE Headquarters. In 1968 off to Viet Nam and in '69 returned to McClellan AFB CA to EC-121 Super Connies, Early Warning & Control Squadron and 552nd Squadron until retirement July 1974.

Returned to Louisiana, built our home here and was in the building Industry and Night School for about 4 years. At that time I worked off shore as a mechanic on a construction barge. Retired with knee problems in 1995.

Richard Foote of Lansdale PA (January 2010)

Retired after over 30 years in the Quality Control Area spectrum from color television picture tubes, minute measuring equipment to trailers for motor vehicles. Also spent time on the drawing board for a telescope in space with a leading Missile and Space Division.

Hobbies include motorcycling with my wife owning several Honda Gold Wings and are both members of GWRRA, PA-Y. I am currently working on the "Sportsman" rated pilots license and active member in the Towamencin Township (PA) Fire Police for 35+ years. My wife and I spend hours weekly assisting the Chaplain in a local Retirement Facility giving assistance for worship services to those requiring help.

Kirk Davis of Bixby OK (January 2010)

I was born in Cleveland OH and married Janet in 1961 and we have 2 children, Kevin and Laura. Upon graduating Embry-Riddle in 1961 joined the USAF. Assigned to 551st AEWCW at Otis AFB (RC121D and EC121H from Jan. '62-Feb.'63 as a flight line mechanic. Off to 7101st ABW, Wiesbaden (T-29B) from Mar '64-May '66 as Crew Chief.

In 1966 was hired as Line Mechanic for American Airlines in Ohio until lay-off in '74. Became an A & P Vocational Instructor with the Cleveland Board of Education from 1975-78 and returned to American Airlines in Tulsa OK as an overhaul mechanic. Retired in 2004 as 737 Technical Specialist Fleet Ops. Engineering.

Enjoy travel, boating, and fishing mainly on Table Rock Lake, Branson MO.

Book Review By Jim "Pappy" Boyington

A fast paced, well written account of the activities of one of the worlds finest navigators during WWII . Dec 7, 1941 Ralph H. Nutter, Harvard Law Student, Dec 8, 1941, ex Harvard Law Student arrives at the air corps recruiting station. He takes the oath. That afternoon Aviation Cadet Nutter is on his way to Maxwell Field. Upon arrival he is instructed to take 60 days leave since there are no instructors or planes available to train pilots.

He agrees to start training as a navigator. The next day he was on a C-47 on his way to Mather Field near Sacramento. In July of 42 he graduated a second lieutenant, navigator and was assigned to the 305th Bomb Group, located at Muroc CA and commanded by Col. Curtis E. Lemay. The 305th had four Squadrons, three B-17s and only three pilots who had even flown a B-17.

After a bone jarring truck ride to Muroc, the driver dropped him off at the mess hall. He took an open seat at a un-crowded table in the corner. Typical 2nd balloon, he had chosen the table reserved for senior officers. A colonel (Lemay) two majors and a captain were seated there. All eyes were on him. He finished his lunch and disappeared as soon as he could..

After lunch, he retreated to his assigned tent and met his pilot, co-pilot and bombardier. That night his pilot mislead him to "Pancho's Inn," a watering hole close to the base later made famous as the hangout of test pilots. Pancho Barnes, herself a pilot, had little use for non-fighter pilots and none at all for navigators. She asked Nutter "What the hell do you need a goddamned navigator for? I've been flying for twenty years. I never got lost. Are you some kind of goddamned accountant.?"

Fortunately a new victim walked in the door and Pancho started in on the newcomer. Two days later, O'Neill, Nutter's pilot received his "checkout", from Lemay. After four, count them four, landings and take-offs, they returned to the hardstand. Lemay climbed out, said to O'Neill "You'll do, and then to Collins, the crew's co-pilot, I'll check you out tomorrow at seven.

The 305th departed Muroc in late August for Tucson expecting delivery of their new B-17s there. After two weeks, plan B had the group travel to Syracuse, NY, a five day train ride. During the first week of October, the promised B-17F's were delivered. The group was to ship out in a week or ten days.

Lemay selected O'Neill and crew to fly to Eglin FL, where weapons were tested for a "Special Assignment." There, they took off with and dropped a large "glide bomb," that was attached under the bomb bay, hitting a target raft in the gulf. It may have been the type weapon that later killed Joe Kennedy. After a stopover in Harrisburg (depot) for some modifications , they returned to Syracuse.

The planned route was direct Gander Newfoundland

then on to Preswick, Scotland. An hour after take-off, a rough number three engine required an unplanned stop in Burlington, VT for temporary repairs. An additional stop at the depot in Bangor Maine for permanent repairs and the crew was again on their way to Gander. After an additional day delay due to delta sierra weather and a forecast that the weather would deteriorate even more, Lemay decided to launch.

Nutter, age 22, a green bean with less than 100 hours flying time embarked on a North Atlantic crossing, in foul weather, with use of radio aids deemed unreliable because of enemy use of false radio signals. At liftoff, an emergency raft stored in a top hatch popped loose. The pilot considered a raft useless under the conditions so he continued the mission. After level off, Nutter's celestial observations indicated the craft was 15 miles so. of course.

At O'Neill's urging Nutter took a second set of celestial observations. The results, 17 miles south of course. Course corrections were applied. Shortly later, number three engine failed to remember it had been repaired , sputtered and failed. They were able to maintain altitude on three engines. Within an hour, number two quit. Fortunately, they had the two outboard engines pulling in sync. Captain O'Neill had the crew jettison baggage, personal items, tools, guns and ammunition, everything , no exceptions.

The aircraft began to lose altitude but was able to level off. Nutter suggested the aircraft be allowed to settle to an altitude low enough where he could see the white caps if the landing light were turned on. He was able to use the drift meter to measure drift and continued to make appropriate course corrections. They coasted in at Belfast and Nutter provided a course to fly direct to Prestwick. They landed an hour later than the other aircraft. Lemay met them, asked how long they had been "ON TWO" and congratulated O'Neill. The next day, again after "temporary repairs," they proceeded to their new home at Grafton Underwood in East Anglia, between Cambridge and Northampton.

Nutter checked into a Quonset hut 22 lieutenants shared. A year later only 2 of the original Muroc group remained. In November three of the seven groups of B-17s in country were reassigned to reinforce embattled forces in North Africa This severely limited the number of aircraft available (max 75) to conduct missions and completely negated the concept of mutually defensive fire power. No missions to Germany were attempted. Sub pens on the coast were attacked.

On November 17 on their first mission, Nutter's squadron did not even carry bombs. They were a diversion force in an attempt to pull off some of the anticipated enemy fighters away from the main force. Nutter was in the last plane of the last squadron "Tail End Charlie" aka "Coffin Corner." There were fewer guns to defend the last plane in the group. After making a feint toward a target separate from that of the main force, (go page 8)

A Young F-100 Pilot's Air Refueling Training

John's comments: While "cruising the web" through Google one night, using "KB-50" as the search term, I came across a remarkable document by Retired AF Colonel Lester G. Fraser. Entitled "A Young Pilot's Odyssey," it details five unusual situations in his Air Force flying career. Given the time he was assigned to his first operational unit, it is not surprising that he had a memorable encounter with aerial tankers, specifically KB-50s. Below is the first of Col Fraser's five situations, lightly edited:

"In 1959, my duty assignment was Seymour Johnson AFB (SJAFB), Goldsboro, North Carolina, the only Air Force base named after a naval aviator. We were flying the F-100C, a single engine, single-seat jet fighter. My flight commander, Turk Turley, had checked me out in the airplane and I was probably the most inexperienced fighter pilot on the base, as well as the youngest at age 23.

"During 1959, there was a recurring need to deliver F-100's to overseas bases. In order to qualify as a delivery pilot, one had to complete five successful refueling hookups with the KB-50 tanker. Turk was determined to get me tanker qualified, as the delivery flights were considered a method of rapidly building flying time as well as a boondoggle.

"The KB-50 was a modified B-29 from World War II and mounted two small jet engines under the wings in addition to the four Pratt & Whitney R-4360 radial engines (the largest US operational piston-driven aviation engine) mounted in the wings. Refueling was accomplished using the probe and drogue method where the tanker would reel out up to three hoses (one from a pod under each wing and one from the tail) with a wire wicker basket, called the drogue, attached to the end of the hose. Maximum refueling speed of the old bird with two burning and four turning was 230 knots indicated, fifty knots above the F-100C's final approach speed at minimum fuel.

"Our model of the F-100C used a short, straight refueling receptacle, a tube under the right wing about ten feet outboard of the fuselage and oriented in the direction of flight. The F-100C's wing was mounted low, so the tube, called the probe, was lower than the pilot's feet and impossible to see unless one turned his head and looked over and down at the probe.

"On my first refueling flight, Turk briefed me to stabilize with the tanker's drogue in front of the F-100's nose and lined up, as best as possible, with the probe. Once stabilized, the key to a successful hook up was to apply sufficient power to drive straight forward with a three to five knot overtake until the probe latched into the drogue. Turk explained that the drogue would gyrate as it passed the F-100's nose but should settle down as the probe was approached. He warned me not to look at the probe as the

KB-50 was only a few feet away and one's attention had to be directed forward to prevent a mid-air collision. A successful contact would reel in the drogue's hose that had white bands painted on it every ten feet. The hose had to be pushed forward forty feet before fuel would flow. If the drogue missed the probe, it could bounce off of the wing or fuselage and the noise could be heard in the cockpit. If the pilot was too high and the drogue passed underneath the F-100, the pilot eventually became aware of the miss when he realized he was very close to the tanker and the hose wasn't reeling in.

"The most important consideration," concluded Turk, "is to keep your control inputs precise and relaxed. All you're doing is flying formation with a different type of airplane, so don't let it intimidate you."

"Completely disregarding Turk's instructions, I approached refueling with the "get a bigger hammer" technique. I jammed the throttle from idle to full military, seesawed the rudders, and swept the cockpit clean with the stick. I had the drogue draped over the horizontal stabilizer, smashing against the canopy and trying to get down the intake (the drogue was too large to be swallowed). After thirty minutes of this jiggery-pokery, Turk sent me back to base. Arriving back at SJAFB, I expected to be greeted with derision, but instead, the general comments to me were "It's a bitch, huh?"

"Follow-on missions were flown like Turk told me the first time and I soon had my five required hookups and associated fuel transfer and qualified to deliver aircraft to foreign countries."

John's comments: Here is a view from the other side of the refueling operator's blister. The other four of Col Fraser's five situations are equally excellent, entertaining, and educational. Plus all his other tales from "our" Air Force. You can find him on the web www.lesfrazier.com. For the specific story from which this is excerpted, hit the button labeled "A Young Pilot's Odyssey."

F-100 Pilot Lost after Failed Air Refueling Attempt

It's very seldom that one of our air refuelings had a fatal casualty involved. But the somber fact is that it did happen. Here's a story from 1958, compiled from a 4440th Aircraft Delivery Group history and the official AF accident report.

On 22 November 1958 a flight of eight F-100s departed Shaw AFB, South Carolina, on a "High Flight" aircraft delivery mission to Europe. They were to be refueled by Kindley-based KB-50s at a point 232 miles east of Kindley, and then press on to a landing at Lajes, Azores. Refueling altitude was to be 29,000 feet, in accordance with a new Hq TAC directive placing the receivers at a more compatible altitude for the fighters than the previous standard 15,000 feet. The new altitude was harder for the tankers, but the recent arrival of the jet-augmented KB-50Js into the (continued on page 6)

Historian (continued from page 5) TAC inventory seemed to make 29,000 feet a “doable” altitude.

The receivers had been briefed before takeoff that their point of safe return to Kindley was five minutes after rendezvous or 30 minutes from Kindley, and if not taking on fuel at that time to return to Kindley.

There were five tankers, including one spare, for the eight fighters (Hotels 1-8). The accident report states that #3 tanker could not extend his right drogue, so Hotel 4 went to the spare tanker’s left drogue. Hotel 3 tried to hook up with his tanker, but fire and smoke was coming from that KB-50’s #4 inboard voltage regulator, according to the accident report. That tanker executed the emergency fire checklist, electrical power was shut off, and the KB-50 went into an emergency descent with the gear down. Hotel 3 contacted the spare tanker and was told to return to Kindley. He departed the formation and headed back to Bermuda. At the same time, Hotel 1 couldn’t take on fuel, and Hotel 2 had difficulty before finally taking on 9500 lbs. Hotel 1 and 2 also turned back toward Kindley and climbed to 36,000 ft enroute. Meanwhile Hotel 3 had descended to 16,000 ft on his way back. A KC-135 in the area provided some useful steers, and, an emergency being declared, rescue aircraft and a helicopter were launched from Kindley.

Hotel 1 and 2 reached the base and both landed safely. Hotel 3 reported 300 lb of fuel at 35 miles out, not enough. At zero fuel he pulled up and ejected at about 1000 ft altitude. The parachute deployed and the pilot hit the water. He initially was sighted, but by the time the helicopter arrived six minutes later he had disappeared. The body was never found. Hotels 4 through 8 all

arrived safely at Lajes after successful refuelings.

The accident board found that the pilot had used incorrect abort procedures, in that he descended to a less efficient fuel burn altitude enroute to Kindley, compounding his fuel problem. Briefings and training were subsequently changed to cover such emergency instances.

The tankers were not found to be at any degree of fault in this case, but hookup problems and the inflight fire had contributed to the emergency. The 4440th history also states that the new 29,000 ft F-100 refueling altitude may have contributed to the problem (this delivery mission being the first to use 29,000 ft), and requested a waiver to the TAC directive. It was granted, and an “intermediate” altitude of 20,000 ft was instituted. Refueling altitudes approximating 20,000 ft continued to be used for the most part for the rest of the KB-50’s operational life.

Neither the accident report nor the unit histories identify the unit or units to which the tankers belonged. The 622nd had primary responsibility for manning Kindley in 1958, but it was often augmented by other units, including the 427th. Does anyone in our membership remember this mission? If so, please contact me with what you recall, and I will report further in the next Tanker Tales.

Also, can anyone comment on the 29,000 ft experiment? In my time in the 429th (1960-63) I do not recall any refueling altitudes above around 20,000 – 22,000 ft or so. I have heard that the normal altitudes for the KB-29 were around 15,000 ft, and for the non-jet equipped KB-50s around 18,000 ft. Thanks for any input.

Larimer (from page 7) when we returned home as a colorful gift from Bermuda. I left the store amazed that no one to date had ever brought this error to their attention. I tried to recall precisely the last time I flew into Kindley AFB while still on active duty. I concluded it was probably sometime during 1973 when I was at Headquarters AF Systems Command, Andrews AFB, MD and getting my flying time on T-29s as an instructor navigator giving annual checks to AF navigators having desk jobs at the Pentagon on other Washington DC area governmental agencies.

Since my wife had never been to Bermuda before, I recommended that we take a comprehensive tour that included all noteworthy sights of interest on the island from one end to the other. During this tour, I was surprised to see that all USN, USAF, and British military facilities had been remodeled or replaced by privately owned office buildings, commercial dock facilities, shopping malls, gardens, and public parking

When our tour bus passed by Bermuda’s international airport and what used to be Kindley AFB, the young bus driver (and tour guide) told us that this entire area had once been a US Naval AB during and after WWII. At the first rest stop break soon thereafter, I had private conversation with the young man, questioned his age, and he said he was 24. I thought to myself that he would have been too young at the time Kindley AFB was closed to know what kind of military base it was. I

informed him that the entire area –he claimed was a US Naval AB—had actually been Kindley AFB.

He politely thanked me for the info, but I could tell by his facial expression that he disbelieved me. A couple of hours late, following a combined luncheon and shopping break at what had been the US Naval Air Station and Naval Operating Base, he confided that he phoned his supervisor, an older man to verify my story and my version was correct.

In retrospect, if the erroneous information contained in the 2009 Bermuda calendar and the tour guide’s briefing are indications of what the citizens of Bermuda know about Kindley AFB, then maybe the USAF ought to take some remedial action. Maybe they should erect a monument at a prominent location on the old site telling the correct story about the important strategic and tactical roles in European and American defense that Kindley played in WWII, the Cold War, and a decade later.

Veterans of the six TAC Tanker Air Refueling Squadrons are well aware of the importance of Kindley in the successful migration of air power to and from Europe. However, we should not overlook the vital role that our US Army Air Corps and the US Navy played during WWII in the defense of Bermuda itself when Nazi U-boats were lurking in the sea lanes all around the island and along the eastern US coast line.

If you go to there, tell the people how it really was!

Our Vanishing Military Presence in Bermuda

By Walt Larimer, 420th Navigator

This is written for those who have served Air force duty (PCS or TDY) in Bermuda. Do you ever wonder what the Bermudians remember about our presence on the island? To the best of my knowledge their remembrances should be very favorable but this story may suggest something else.

Actually, Bermuda is not one island as many people believe. It is a group of over 200 small and tiny islands, all connected by tiny bridges or by tons of sand, dirt, and coral fill, and occupying a very small area in the Atlantic Ocean. This group of small islands is situated about 750 miles due east of Charleston, SC, giving post-WWII trained navigators a good chance to renew/upgrade their over water navigation skills in dead reckoning, drift meter, determining the aircraft's true heading by use of the sun, night celestial, pressure pattern, LORAN, CONSOL, and radar (as Bermuda landfall is finally acquired and "saves the day").

I don't believe the AF navigators of today are trained in the use of many of these forms of navigation aids because of their obsolescence and inefficiencies when compared with modern GPS aids. I often wonder how today's navigators function when a complete electrical failure occurs on the aircraft and the GPS aids are unable to receive electrical power. These over water navigation skills were of paramount importance to those of us who regularly crossed the "big pond."

Successfully arriving at Bermuda from the Azores was always an interesting test of nerves and spirit for young and inexperienced KB-29 and KB-50J navigators...and for all of us when challenged by severe weather, heavy turbulence, bad radio reception interference, a sick radar, and maybe one, two, or three sick engines. I reluctantly accepted the latter conditions as the "norm" for the Bermuda Triangle.

My wife and I had the opportunity to visit Bermuda in August 2009 on a Norwegian Cruise ship out of Baltimore MD. Our ship was one of the cruise line's oldest ships and was going to be retired at the end of the year. Its' crew was totally dedicated to the purpose of pleasing perpetual eaters of all sizes, colors, and ages: middle age party folks; Caribbean island music lovers; teen age reggae dancers; hopeful casino gamblers; and well oiled, bikini clad, sun worshipers. Barbara and I soon concluded we didn't fit in properly with this interesting conglomeration....but we tried anyway.

After delaying our ship's arrival by a full day—due to stormy conditions and high winds in Bermuda—the ship's captain tied up to a small pier located in St. George. You may remember from your duty days on the island that St. George was a small fishing village about three miles from Kindley AFB. You may also recall that the residents had erected a full scale reproduction of the old wooden stocks in the village square to remind naughty tourists how strict British justice was once administered to people found guilty of committing serious and minor crimes.

I remember that getting to St. George from the BOQ at Kindley AFB was a safe and relatively quick motorized bike ride, but only on days when the pavement was dry.

Another thought that quickly came to my mind was that a significant number of men assigned to the Air Force painful days recovering from nasty motorized bike spills that had occurred on rainy days or nights. The posted speed limits on the island never exceeded 35 mph, but that limit was pretty easy to surpass when riding down hill. Motorized bike speeds over 20 mph combined with rain, slippery Bermuda pavement, and maybe one or two Bermuda rum swizzles have ruined many TDYs for first time motorized bike riders.

The channel entering or leaving the bay at St. George is so narrow that large ships are only permitted to pass through when the prevailing winds are less than 25 knots. As we cruised slowly through that channel, I believe there was not more than 50 feet of open water clearance from either side of the hull (port and starboard) to the coral rocks designating the entrance. If the ship is unable to enter the channel because of high winds, it must remain out at sea or dock at another port on the island such as Hamilton (the governmental seat) several miles away. However, during the heavy tourist season, the docks in Hamilton are often occupied by one or two other cruise ships.

About ten minutes after we disembarked from the ship, it started to rain in torrents. It reminded me of the sudden on and off torrential rains that we experienced in SEA during the monsoon season. To escape the heavy downpour during our stroll into the village, we darted into the nearest gift store. It was an art store that specialized in selling beautiful watercolor pictures of Bermuda houses, flowers, gardens, beaches, and seascapes to the tourists. I picked up a colorful calendar on sale that featured the same type of artwork that the shop sold.

The calendar also contained a lot of historical information of importance to Bermuda as well as several recipes for favorite seafood dishes and beverages (like the famous Bermuda rum swizzle). I was informed by the saleslady, who possessed a distinct British accent, that she was the co-owner of the store and that she had drawn all the originals of the pictures used in the calendar. She volunteered that her husband had contributed to the project by inserting tidbits of historical information.

My attention was quickly drawn to the following historical dates and notations on the pages of the calendar: "1939-War with Germany begins. It ends in 1945. 1940-Work begins on 2 US bases. They increase Bermuda's land area by 1000 acres, but it doesn't belong to us until 1995. 1951-Royal Navy Dockyard closes. 1957-Last British regiment leaves. 1995-US Naval Air Base & Annex also closed. 2001-NASA's Cooper Island base was closed."

I advised the saleslady that one of the two US bases discussed in the notations must have been Kindley AFB and not a US Naval installation because I had visited Kindley on Official AF duty numerous times during the 1960s and early 1970s. She thanked me for this information and stated that she and her husband had designed and sold these calendars ever since they moved to Bermuda from England 12 years ago. She stated that they were not aware of any AF presence on the island. I bought a copy of the calendar and mailed it to my daughter (Cont. page 6)

TAC Tanker Tales

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Book Report (from page 4) Lemay had the 305th group turn back to England..

Nutter saw Plymouth and the near 100% under-cast over the island. He took a reading with the drift meter and using Plymouth as his last known position continued to track the group, using dead reckoning. After flying and circling for several minutes, Lemay's navigator admitted he could not locate their base below the heavy under cast. Lemay asked on the radio, "Is there any navigator there who knows where we are?"

Second Lieutenant Nutter, fourteen months out of flight school, just a bit over one-hundred hours in the air, pipes up "Yes sir, this is five-four-nine-two, we're about ten miles from the base." Lemay responds "Take the lead, we'll follow you in. Soon Nutter recognized terrain through a hole in the clouds and transmitted "I've spotted the base."

Lemay and the group followed Nutter's plane through the hole to a successful recovery. Upon climbing out of his B-17, Nutter was met by Lemay who said "You are now group navigator for the three-oh-fifth. You'll be in charge of navigation and lead us on every mission you fly from now on." "Sir, I'm only a Second Lieutenant. I can't give orders to First Lieutenants and Captains." "Tell me if they don't obey you." Lemay then offered Second Lieutenant Nutter a ride, saying "We'll go to operations and critique today's mission. You'll find that I appreciate navigators. I am a navigator by nature."

As Lemay rose to higher rank and responsibility, he took Nutter with him. Nutter was the hands on navi-

gator doing the planning for the many missions that followed. When General Hansell (the Possum) was kicked upstairs to be replaced by Lemay (the Eagle) and later was assigned to take command of the B-29 Twentieth Air Force, he asked Nutter to be his navigator. Nutter was once again the hands on navigator planning the major operations in the entire theatre. Again, Hansell was relieved of command and replaced by Lemay.

Lemay's low level night attack on Tokyo on March 10, 1945, started the destruction of Japan's ability to wage war. By September, all major cities except those off limits had been reduced to rubble. Nutter, relatively unknown is every bit as much a navigator as Magellan, Cook, Columbus and the rest of worlds best. His careful planning helped save the lives of our crews and contributed to more damage to the enemy.

His book "**With the Possum and the Eagle**," tells it like it was from the perspective of the personal navigator of the two generals who led the bombers through the most difficult missions ever flown. The narrative describes combat as only one in his unique position could possibly comprehend. We are given an appreciation of the decisions the commanders had to make from General Arnold on down.

No one else could possibly possess Nutter's overview. This will raise our appreciation of Lemay's unique strengths, "the right man for the right job." The decisions currently being made with regard to military budget, particularly that of the Air Force indicate we are repeating the history of pre WWII. Published by Presidio Press in 2002, ISBN 0-89141-754-0