

TAC Tanker Tales

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One Month Until Deadline For San Antonio

Dear Reunionites and potential attendees: Due to the fact that our dates for this year were moved up, we are looking at a shorter period to register and get hotel rooms. Our block is full, but we added more rooms at the special rate of \$124, so hop to it if you can join us. We close the books on **March 30th**, and that is also the **deadline** for the hotel rates.

Lou has been posting the **attendees** on the website as the registrations come in to me. I also get a list from the hotel every few weeks to see who has a booking in our block. We monitor this to be sure to remind you to complete BOTH chores. We are getting up in years and often forget stuff. (Really??)

Plans to have **menus** from local eateries placed in the Hospitality room as well as whatever is still in the Store Closet. Hopefully we will sell whatever is left. I know the **hats** are still available and I can send you one if you cant get to the reunions. They are \$15 and we will cover the postage. I am sure those of you who "live" in your cap ,might find a newer version could be needed by now. (Again, we're getting old and wear out things-or lose them.)

Once we arrive at the deadline, I notify the hotel about banquet numbers as well as get the Hop-on-hop –off tickets for Monday and provide the total passengers for the shuttle that night and the Gray Line Tour to Hill Country (LBJ's and Fredricksburg).

A reminder that this being an even number year, we will be having a **Business Meeting/ Memorial Service** on Wednesday afternoon around 3pm in the Hospitality Room. Main topics– the move of the KB-50 to Dover and the future of our reunions.

Remember that our **Banquet** on Wednesday will be Western Wear attire with prizes for cutest, most handsome and cleverest. Boots are optional, sorry, no horses (not even Service horses).

Looking forward to seeing everyone again; stay healthy! and drive safe. Hugs to all, Natalie

President's Views From Vic-

Hi Everyone. Out here in California, we are starting to get some winter weather. We know that many of you have suffered through a variety of severe storms, wet, cold and otherwise and pray that things worked out.

The great news for the beginning of 2018 is that since all of aircraft #389 (Mac Dill) has arrived at Dover AFB, we have complied with our promise of many years ago, to donate \$25,000 to the AMC Museum at Dover to assist in its restoration, which is being done as we speak.

On our website there are many photos forwarded from the museum folks showing the tedious and professional work their team is doing to resurrect an aircraft that had been on display for 20 years, caught in the crosswinds of salt air.(there are also a few in this issue.)

If you're not an internet user, please go to your local library and ask the librarian to log you onto TACTankers.com on one of their public computers. This will take seconds and it'll take you at least an hour to go through the hundreds of photos amassed by Vice President Lou Chapman.

In closing, I'm looking forward to seeing many of you in San Antonio. For those unable to attend the reunion and enjoy one or more of the events arranged by Natalie, remember that we are always thinking of each of you and the contributions that you made as a TAC Tanker. And please forward any articles or pictures you have from the past. Thanks to those who already have. Lou continues to do a great job organizing and displaying them.

As always, adios for for now,
Vic

PS: There 's nothing more beautiful than an out-of-gas pilot seeing a Tanker.

Board Chairman's Corner

by Bill Wolford

Attention all TAC Tankers and family: You have less than 60 days to be in San Antonio for our upcoming reunion. Make sure you get your reservations into Natalie, who has planned a great time in San Antonio for us all. At this time we have extra rooms at the hotel. Shirley and I are looking forward to seeing you all at the reunion. It is always the high-point of our year.

I had to have another stint put in for my heart which make it #5. I am doing very well in cardiac rehab and finish the 1st of April and am chomping at the bit to see you all.

I celebrated a milestone on 28 February. It was the 45th anniversary of my retirement from the USAF 1973. I can't believe I went into the Air Force 65 years ago. How time "flies." I had my 84th birthday on the 20th. Of course this also means I'm getting "older than dirt." I know that most of you all can relate to this. We are a special group.

At the reunion, we will have some major decisions to make at the Business meeting, concerning the continuation of our organization. Thus, we would like to have as many as possible be with us there to help make these decisions.

God Bless you and Looking forward to seeing you, Bill



From MacDill to Dover——***Finally!***



This will be the last newsletter before the San Antonio Reunion, so if you are planning on attending, make sure you have a room reserved and your registration filled out and mailed to Natalie prior to March 30th. That is the cut-off date for our \$124 room rate starting on the 29th of April and running through May 2nd. Remember that May 3rd will be the checkout date.

For those who aren't aware, the KB-50 that was at Mac Dill now resides (although in parts and pieces) at the Air Mobility Museum at Dover DE. There are 81 pictures posted on our TAC Tankers Facebook page which can be viewed at this link. (<http://tinyurl.com/y8m5phxa>)

I would like to acknowledge a new Life Member to TAC Tankers. Don Sloan (Col. Ret. USAFR), Board Chairman of the AMC Museum Foundation, recently mailed in a Life Membership. I spoke with him and he told me his reason was because of the generosity and dedication of our group to bringing 49-0389 to Dover and what we are helping to preserve. Being that Dover is a satellite field museum for the National Museum of the Air Force, and that their focus is on Airlift and Refueling aircraft, it is only natural that the KB-50 should be displayed there. Questions have been asked as to why it doesn't go back the National Museum, but the truth is, it didn't receive the care at Wright-Patterson or at Mac Dill that has been shown to other aircraft they own.

In January as trucks arrived with the disassembled sections, the Dover volunteers got busy checking everything, especially the condition of the wings and tail sections. Those that needed immediate attention were taken into their shop and the repair work began. When all the work is completed, then the airframe will be re-assembled and the engines attached. It will be nice to finally see it with the proper tail markings and tail number. Thanks to the TAC Tankers members, Vic Ventura, Mike Leister (Retired Director), Johnny Taylor (Current Director) and Don Sloan and the AMC Museum Foundation staff for their work in making this happen.

Special Information on Transportation in San Antonio

Taxi Rates: Call 210-434-4444 for a Professional Taxi Driver. They are licensed and vetted by City of San Antonio with a law enforcement criminal background check for your safety.

Affordable prices by professional drivers. Ask your driver for your 5% discount. Low fares are \$2.35 per mile. The taxis are charged per vehicle NOT per person.

Up to 4 persons from airport to downtown, total fare \$24-\$25 for all passengers!

Note: Airport shuttle rates are per person, \$18 each person to downtown area.

This information is brought to you by Lou Chapman who "seeks the truth."

Obits of Members

Lt. Col. Don M. Smock (USAF, Ret.) 429th, 420th Life Member, passed away at the age of 92 on Thursday, October 19, 2017. He was born in Franklin, Indiana and was a resident of Hampton for 43 years. He was a pilot with the U.S. Air Force and retired in June 1974 after 29 years of service. He served during [WWII](#), and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. He earned various medals, including the Air Medal and the [Bronze Star](#) twice. He is survived by his wife of 72 years, Lucille Smock. A celebration of Don's life was held Monday, October 23, 2017 at Parklawn-Wood Funeral Home. Entombment followed at Parklawn Memorial Park.



Major George E. Bond, USAF, retired, 89, died Monday, November 27, 2017 after a long battle, ever the warrior. A 60 year resident of Hampton and three war veteran, he served in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. George grew up in Lancaster, OH and graduated from Ohio University and then joined the Air Force as a navigator. In Vietnam, he served as commander of communications and tower operations in Pleiku for which he received medals including the Bronze Star. After 27 years of service he retired and began work as a commercial pilot and chief flight instructor at Flight International for 20 years. With a passion for flying, George was one of the founders of the Langley AFB Aero Club. He will be remembered by family and friends as the life of the party, with his talent on the piano, booming voice and incredible personality. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Karen. A graveside service was conducted Friday, December 1, 2017 at Parklawn Memorial Park.



George Raymond Burrows, 81, of Alpena Michigan passed away Wednesday, January 10, 2018, at Tendercare Alpena. George was born March 15, 1936, in Petoskey MI. He graduated in the Class of 1954 from Petoskey High School. He served in the United States Air Force from 1955 until his honorable discharge in 1958. On October 7, 1961, he married Marilyn Bachelor at First Christian Church in Petoskey. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Marilyn; two sons and other family members. He was assigned to the 429th, was a Life Member and served as the Chaplain for TAC Tankers for a number of years.

Memorial visitation and a Celebration of Life took place at Long Rapids First Congregational Church. Military honors were accorded him by Posen V.F.W. Post 7804. Inurnment will take place in the spring on the Burrow's family plot of Greenwood Cemetery in Petoskey.



Margaret Switzer, a great wife and mother, passed away at home on Saturday, December 2, 2017. She was 83 years old. Margaret was born on September 13, 1934 in Macon, Georgia. A devoted military wife, Margaret supported her husband, Gilbert while he was stationed all over the country with the United States Air Force. Her memory will forever be treasured by her husband of 59 years, Gilbert; her children; grandchildren, several nieces and nephews. and many friends.



Historian's Corner

by John Bessette

More about the Tale of the Errant TAC Fighters, December 1960

Having written in the December 2017 Tanker Tales about the late George Bond, legendary 429th navigator, and his classic response to a TAC fighter pilot convinced he, not the KB-50 navigator, knew where his formation was, I thought briefly about coordinating my article with Vernon F (Fred) Gardner, a 429th nav legend in his own right, at the time. "Nah," I said, preoccupied with Christmas preparations. Turned out I should have listened to myself.

Turned out, Fred had told his side of this tale to me seven-plus years ago. It just adds to the legend of both these guys. When Fred saw my article (December 2017 Tales, page 5), he promptly e-mailed me with his side of the story. I had written about this before, in the March 2007 Tales. That article had been provided to us as the December 1960 experience of a young TAC F-104 pilot in a formation of seven receivers, traversing the North Atlantic on return home after TDY in Spain. That pilot was later, as General Merrill McPeake, to become the AF Chief of Staff 1990-1994.

Fred's contribution to this tale came in his role as lead navigator in the KB refueling formation. Fred reminded me that it was he who told the errant F-104 jockeys that, if they wanted fuel, they were way north of course and to turn SSE to join the tankers. When the "lead jock" refused to take that heading, Fred did say that it was GEORGE who invoked the Creator and "persuaded" the formation to join the tankers. After that humbling experience, all went well.

For the "complete" version of this tale, consult Tanker Tales issues March and December 2007, as well as my memorial to George in the December 2017 issue. If anyone wishes copies, please contact me. Thanks!

A Former Navigator Remembers the 420th and the KB-50

There is an outfit called the Air Force Navigators Observers Association (AFNOA) which, among other activities, puts out a periodical called "DR Ahead." I found a copy of the January 2017 issue, featuring an article about the KB-50, its mission, and its activities at Sculthorpe in the 420th AREFS. The author, David C. Lukens, graduated navigator training in early 1959 and was assigned to the 420th from March 1959 to January 1961. Lukens effectively introduces the KB, mission, and activities for the reader, who may never have heard of the tactical fighter air refueling mission. It's very good and worthwhile from that perspective.

He mentions one event which he says happened on his first mission: the KB's right aileron became partially detached while the aircraft was climbing, and only superior airmanship saved the aircraft and crew. He says that the AC was Capt Robert Meyers, who had had B-29 and B-50 experience going back to World War II.

This incident sent me into our records, where I found a very similar story which was described in Tanker Tale issues for September and December 2009. However, in that case the AC is mentioned as Capt Harold "Hal" Schohans, and some other detail differs considerably. Walt Larimer, a long-time TTA member, was instrumental in 2009 in describing the Schohans incident. He had corresponded with several people who told a compelling story about the aileron problem (read the articles!). I am tempted to think there may have been two similar incidents about the same time (1959), but the evidence is slim. I am mailing Walt a copy of the Lukens article to get his views.

(Continued on the bottom of Page 8)

While a student doing research at Maxwell AFB's SOS (Squadron Officer School) in 1961, I came across the "Battle of the Bismark Sea." I had transited the battle area in 1959 with the 421st during "Handclasp Five," a goodwill trip to Australia. I became intrigued with the "mast head" bombing and strafing attacks that sank all eight transports, two destroyers and left two more destroyers heavily damaged.

This was my first acquaintance with the 3rd Attack Group then operating Douglas A-20s and North American B-25s. The Japanese had been conducting a massive build up of forces in New Guinea with plans to eventually invade Australia. B-17s had located the convoy on March 2, 1943.

The battle ran through the 5th. General George C. Kenney, Commander of Allied Air Forces and the 5th Air Force, unleashed his entire force in a must do effort to stop Japan's reinforcements from reaching Lae. This victory discouraged Admiral Yamamoto from further adventures in that direction. In April, Yamamoto's aircraft was ambushed by P-38s at Bougainville.

In May, Japan's easterly drive was derailed in the Battle of the Coral Sea, (TTA's Bo Ault's dad sank a carrier), a second one was knocked out of action and Japan's air groups decimated. All this, followed by the Battle of Midway in June, turned the course of the war in the Pacific.

Gunn's innovations were instrumental in giving rebirth to the low level attack, a highly effective tactic. In 1964, the 8th Tactical Bomb Squadron at Clark Air Base RPI became my home, where low level attack was refined. The "hard nosed" B-25 preceded the B-57 and foreshadowed the A-10, all supreme ground support aircraft

I remembered how well we had been treated when we arrived in Brisbane in 1959. Only after having learned of how tense things were during the war was their gratitude fully appreciated.

The man behind this gallant effort was Paul Irvin Gunn, a civilian who had been inducted in the Army Air Corps. In 1916, Gunn (age 17, he lied) enlisted in the US Navy. He volunteered for the aviation branch and ultimately earned the a rating of pilot.

After retirement, in 1939, he accepted a position with PAL (Philippine Air Lines) as chief pilot. His family, wife and four children lived in Manila. On December 8, 1941, the Army Air Corps assets were in shambles.

Gunn commandeered the airline's equipment and joined the fight. He was inducted into the Air Corps, flew evacuation and resupply missions throughout the invasion and served as maintenance chief, salvaging wrecked aircraft and returning them to service. He was unable to rescue his family and they became prisoners of Japan.

After retreating to Australia, the Army Air Corps (what was left of the shambles), was in desperate need. Uncle Sam had nothing to offer. Gunn learned of 24 brand new B-25s sold to the Netherlands East Air Force that were resting in a storage facility. He promptly stole them, assembled them and delivered them to the Air Corps.

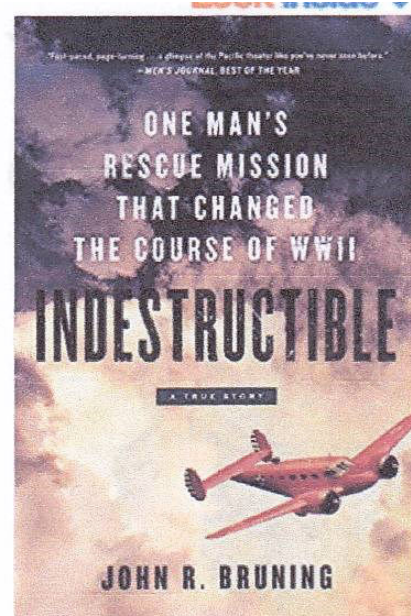
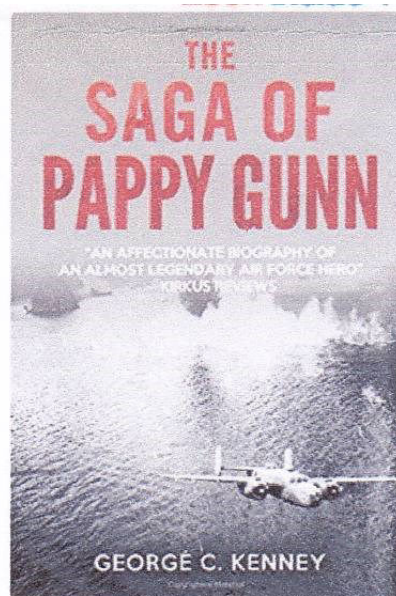
While working for the 3rd Attack Group Commander, he saw they needed more firepower and devised modifications to install more machine guns in the nose and on blisters strapped to the fuselage. In addition, he extended their range.

When General Kenney learned of Gunn, he had him assigned to his staff. Their collaboration resulted in this "red headed stepchild" force punching way above its weight.

The Saga of Pappy Gunn written by General Kenney in 1959, two years after Gunn's death and released in paperback last year is essentially a love note, a tribute to someone he recognized not only as heroic, but as a legend of those times. (Cont. on Page 8)

Book Report– Cont. from page 7) A delighul read (103 pages) practically free, is book bargain of the century! For a more in depth look, Gunn's son, Nathaniel's *Pappy Gunn* is a well documented account of his father's war record and an intimate look at family life in a Japanese Prison Camp.

Beyond that, John Brunning's *Indestructible*, offers over 500 pages of well written, glorious detail. All are available through Amazon. Check out the reviews. This is truly an amazing story, unbelievable but mostly true. Pappy's tall tales are a bonus. I was able to pay my respects to both Col Paul "Pappy" Gunn and Col. Bud Day at the Barrancas National Cemetery on Pensacola NAS.



(Historian Column Continued from page 6) Unfortunately the TTA material I have (aside from the two 2009 articles) has no mention of the aileron problem or the purported incident/incidents. If anyone in TTA recalls the aileron problem, please contact me.

A 421st Veteran Sends Material for Our Files

Back in November I received a nice fat letter from H. Franklin McMurtray, a veteran of the 421st AREFS at Yokota Air Base, Japan, 1956-59. It contained several articles from the Yokota Afterburner, the base newspaper. One July 1956 piece covered the third anniversary of the 421st activation, reminding the reader how in 1955 421st KB-29s enabled PACAF F-84 fighters to fly nonstop Yokota – Melbourne Australia, a world record at the time.

Several pieces covered the arrival of the first KB-50s, flown from the States in February 1957 to replace the KB-29s. Featured was a special "passenger," a dog named Derby who was joining its human family (that of Sgt T E Roberts, a refueling operator in the 421st). Hard to do this today! Thanks for this material – it enhances our history.