

TAC Tanker Tales

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Time is Getting Close for Dover

Showtime is almost upon us and the deadline to register with me for your events and get a room at the Sheraton Wilmington South is April 14th. So far we have 60 people (all ages) either on my books or with a hotel room. My concern of course is the transportation. We chartered 1 -56 pax bus per day for the reunion and I am sure we will need more-maybe 2 -40 pax. Thus getting your reservations in ASAP will help to plan.

In the last issue, I had a hanging "chad" and that was the Thursday night boat issue. I phoned again to find out their schedule which had changed and learned that we would have to "charter the boat " for \$1500, then pay \$45 per meal. With the bus expense looming above us, I decided to go with the Big Fish Grill, a super nice facility overlooking the river (and the boat). During our visit to DE last year, we had lunch there with the CVB ladies and we were impressed. So the deposit is in and we will have a plated dinner with four entrée options for you to select when you get there. Amen

Our issue is getting smaller as is our membership and after the reunion, I will be wrapping up the files and having a final report in July-a month late as we are heading to Europe for a month, providing travel is permitted due to the coronavirus problem. Anyway, I look forward to seeing everyone in Wilmington/Dover for the Grand Finale and dedication of good ole 389. Read about the special bench were will have there in Lou's column.

Drive, fly or bus it safely to the gathering in May.
Till then, I am faithfully yours, Natalie

President's Views From Vic-

Hello again TAC Tankers. As our reunion approaches we continue to receive updated information from many sources. First of all, on a down note, the aircraft (389) will not be painted in time for the dedication ceremony. Due to the extent of the corrosion the recovery crew has had to spend an inordinate amount of time doing structural repair work. In September's newsletter I mentioned the "English Wheel". Well they are using it a lot to fabricate many of the airplane's ribs, no two of which have the same diameter. This use of technology is prevalent throughout the staff. No stone is left unturned. Their knowledge and professional expertise excite me the most. It will be all put together and presentable for our dedication ceremony. When it is finished we and the Museum personnel will all be proud of the airplane.

Discussions for the agenda of the dedication of 389 are in progress. I will be stressing a short program that mentions the names of all who had a hand in the restoration. This will allow plenty of time for everyone to enjoy all of the other displays at the museum.

As always, adios for now,

Chaplain's Chat

Rev. Ellen Dodd

Happy Spring! Am I a bit premature on that one? I hope it's not too much longer. My daffodils aren't up and blooming yet here in West Central Illinois. They always get a snow on them, so I guess I'd better leave the snowmelt by the back door. We are in the season of Lent which is an excellent time for renewal and reflection. Maybe you gave up one of your favorite things for Lent, maybe not. I would encourage you to add something during Lent. Maybe a smile for a stranger? You could make a difference in their life by showing someone still cares.

Have you been meaning to make a donation to a favorite charity? Now's a good time, they need it. Is there someone you've been meaning to call or visit? It's been a rough winter for them, go ahead. We don't need a season for kindness. Let it become a habit. Welcome the Spring season with a renewal of your spirit and a loving heart. Hope to see you in Dover in a few weeks with a big smile on your face.

I can't believe how fast the years have gone since we've been involved with the TAC Tankers group. It seems like a whole lifetime of memories and yet it was for us, only seven years in the KBs.

Four years at Langley, a brand new pilot just out of pilot training. In those days, things were very different. I arrived at Langley with my mobile home, Shirley and our son. Three days later, while I'm still processing they have a squadron recall. I rushed out to the base, was issued all my gear, parachute, (buttboat) dingy, helmet, oxygen mask, and an A-3 bag to put it all in.

Went through the processing line, got 3 shots in each arm, met Verne Williamson who was the Aircraft Commander and instructor pilot. He took me out to the KB- 50, which was the biggest thing I had ever seen. Told the flight engineer to show me how to pre-flight the airplane while he went to file his flight plan with the navigator.

When he returned we crawled into the airplane, Verne said: "Don't touch anything. Just read the check list." We cranked up the engines, taxied out and took off for the Goose (Goose Bay, Labrador). Three and one half weeks later I returned as a qualified, checked-out co-pilot.

Four years later I left for Yokota AB, Japan as an aircraft commander with a wife and 3 children. We had three great years in the 421st flying all over the Pacific and the Philippines and many weeks on the alert pad. We worked with some of the most wonderful people I have ever had the privilege to know. Shirley said she and the kids spent 3 years in Japan while I was gone during the time we were stationed there.

After leaving Japan in May of 1963, we went to bootstrap at the University of Nebraska. Then on to C-130's in MAC at McGuire AFB. Didn't think about the Tankers for many years, until we returned from our volunteer work in Israel in 1996. Shortly after that we got involved with the TAC Tanker Association and we have loved the opportunities to see old friends and make new ones over all these years.

I just turned 86 in February. We're looking forward to the reunion in Wilmington and the display of our refurbished KB-50. I hope as many of you as possible can make it to this memorable occasion. I know the program that Natalie has set up will be great. I want to take this opportunity to thank each one of you who have contributed so much over these years.

Bill



Our Membership Vice President's Column

by Lou Chapman

For all of you who are counting, the Big Finale in Delaware is only 2 months away. If you are planning on attending, get your room reservation ASAP, fill out your registration form and mail it to Natalie before the cut-off date of April 14.

In December, I got a call from Bob Seay asking why we couldn't have a bench in front of 49-0389. When he and Natalie had visited the museum, he saw a number of aircraft on display that had one that identified the type plane and was sitting in front of it. I decided to find out what it would take to get one, and after talking with Don Sloan (COB AMC Museum Foundation), he told me the AMC Foundation would take care of it and cover the cost. I then sent out information about the AMC Museum Bench Program and we have had a great response. The KB-50 Superfortress bench has been ordered, and at this time, these are the 24 names that will be on the plaque which will be attached to it. [Jimmy Caddell](#) 421st, [James Callahan](#) 429th/420th(donated by Bonnie Callahan), [Louis Chapman](#) 421st, [Charles Clark](#) 431st, [Dave DeRuiter](#) 429th, [Francis Gawell](#) 427th, [Jack Gilpin](#) 421st(donated by James Caddell), [Harry Hansen](#) 421st, [Eugene Henry](#) 427th/421st, [Nathaniel and Natalie Hill](#) 421st/429th(donated by Robert Seay), [John Hoyle](#) 431st, [Gordon Jacobson](#) 427th, [Winston Jacobson](#) 427th(donated by Gordon Jacobson), [Howard Mathews](#) 420th, [Gary Myers](#) 420th/431st, [Jim O'Dell](#) 431st, [Michael O'Leary](#) 427th/429th, [David Scott](#) 431st, [Robert Seay](#) 4505th ARW, [Pat Selfridge](#) 421st, [William Szanyi](#) 429th/421st/ 427th(donated by Annella Szanyi), [Billie J Taylor](#) 429th/421st(donated by Patt Taylor), [Willie Varner](#) 421st(donated by James Caddell), [Clarence Veino](#) 421st(donated by Lou Chapman), and [Bill Wolford](#) 429th/421st. There is room for many more names, and if you wish to donate \$100, it will help support the museum and their work on saving not only our KB-50J, but others that have a place in Air Mobility history.

As your Vice President since 2010, I am looking forward to attending my 14th consecutive and sadly, my last reunion. I hope to see as many members and "old" friends there that are able to attend. Looking back, it has been a long and sometimes frustrating journey to get 49-0389 from MacDill to Dover, but the dedication and hard work that our President Vic Ventura put in has finally borne fruit and we will see the results at the dedication ceremony. I hope you can be a part of it and appreciate the progress the AMC museum volunteers have made during the restoration. And lastly, a big thanks to Don Sloan, who also became a LIFE Member of TAC Tankers, for keeping us in the loop with updates and being available to answer any of our questions and concerns.



Obits of Members

Colonel Gerald Francis Reed, Sr. (Air Force, Retired) 88, of Catonsville, died Saturday, February 1, 2020 at Charlestown Retirement Village. He was born January 30, 1932, in Ovid, New York and he was predeceased by his loving wife, Mary Evelyn Reed.

He was a devoted husband and father. Jerry was a registered nurse until he joined the Air Force in 1955 to become a pilot. He was later assigned to the 429th Air Refueling Squadron and was a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War. While serving as a Forward Air Controller, he received the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross and Meritorious Service medals. He retired from the Air Force in 1982, and then worked at Westinghouse until 1991. Surviving are his two sons and two daughters. A mass of Christian Burial was held on Friday, February 7, 2020 at Our Lady of the Angels, Charlestown Retirement Community, Catonsville, MD Interment will be at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date. Jerry was a Life Member of TAC Tankers and had attended several reunions



Clarence L. Veino (M/Sgt. Retired) was born October 22nd 1935 and passed away on January 15th 2020 in Tacoma WA from complications due to a fall. He was with the 421st AREFS, was a Life Member of TAC Tankers and had only missed two reunions since the first one in 2000 held in Tucson. He came from a large family with four brothers and a sister and he enlisted in the military at a young age. He proudly served over 20 years in the United States Air Force.



During his time in the Air Force he was stationed at many different places worldwide, including Biggs AFB, Saudi Arabia, Yokota AB, Tachikawa AB Japan and George AFB Victorville CA. It was on his second tour in Japan that he met his wife Yaeko. They spent 52 wonderful years together before her passing in 2016. After leaving the service, he spent about 15 years in civil service working on submarines at Mare Island Naval Shipyard in CA. After retiring, he and Yaeko travelled often, enjoying cruises and other vacations in many different places around the world. For the last several years he lived in a retirement community in Tacoma where he enjoyed doing various activities with his friends there. He is survived by two sons, a daughter-in-law, a grandson, and two brothers. Funeral Services were held Saturday January 25th, 2020 at the Scott Funeral Home Tacoma, WA. On February 16th his ashes were interred along side his wife Yaeko's at the Fairmont Memorial Park in Fairfield CA.

Alethea Eulaine Gillespie Sturdevant, 89, of Cynthiana KY, wife of Robert Harry Sturdevant (622nd/421st), passed away Friday, August 30, 2019 at Harrison Memorial Hospital. She was born August 5, 1930 in Tollesboro, Kentucky and graduated from the University of Kentucky School of Agriculture & Home Economics, earning a Bachelor of Science Degree, and received her Master's Degree as a Registered Dietician from the University of Iowa. Alethea spent several years traveling with Robert on his tours in the U.S. Air Force and served as a substitute teacher on the bases where they were stationed. In 1965, they settled in northern Illinois where they raised their family. They retired to Cynthiana in 1995. She is survived by her husband Robert, a son and 2 daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



Services were held on Saturday, September 7, 2019 at the Indian Creek Christian Church, Cynthiana KY. Burial

Mary J. "Judy" Pflughaupt, 77, of Sherwood AR went to be with her Lord on October 3, 2019. She was born on November 25, 1941 in Clarksdale, Mississippi. A graduate of Mississippi State College for Women, Judy had a career in teaching and retired from the Little Rock School District. She enjoyed travel, reading, and serving her Lord. She is survived by Gary Pflughaupt (421st), her husband of 53 years, a son, daughter and four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Visitation was held on Monday, October 7 at Sylvan Hills First Baptist Church with a funeral service immediately following. Interment is at Arkansas State Veteran's Cemetery.



Into The Mouth Of The Cat. Why a review for an out of print and hard to find book? This article is an attempt to acquaint you with the life of Lance Sijan, Medal of Honor recipient, a young man who demonstrated extraordinary heroism, far beyond the call of duty. It will include a couple of URL's that will tell in more detail just how extraordinary Lance was. Trust me, today's young people are much more likely to search the web than crack a book. This is too important for them to miss.

Mission planning and execution are described in detail, as are the actions of all the aircraft engaged in rescue operations. The horrors of POW life, recollections of the people who were intimately involved as POWs, activities at Danang, the search, Lance's last days and particularly the recommendation for the MOH award make this a "you were there" story.

On Nov 9, 1967, the backseater of an F-4 was blown out of the sky over Laos. A badly banged up "Yankee Air Pirate" survived, his pilot, also the squadron commander did not. Officially, there were no flights in Laos. A valiant rescue attempt put the jungle penetrator within 20 feet of Lance. He called off that early rescue attempt because of heavy anti-aircraft fire and because of his wounds. When his radio batteries became depleted, he could no longer communicate. Six weeks later, he had crawled over three miles to a road to increase his chances of making contact. When captured, Lance, (less than 100 pounds) overcame his captor and escaped, only to be recaptured hours later and severely punished.

Relocated to a holding camp near Vinh just after Christmas, Lance continued to be interrogated (tortured). His beatings were overheard by a pair of

Misty Pilots (F-100 Fast FAC pilots Capt. Guy Gruters and Major Bob Craner) in a cell close by. After a couple of days of "interrogation" the guard turned his near death body over to them. Gruters recognized him and was in shock seeing his condition. Lance continued to discuss escape plans. They nursed him and kept him alive on the three day bone jarring trip to Hanoi. Three more days of "interrogation" continued. He lingered and his two "nurses" did what they could to keep him alive. He continued to "soldier on" and talk of escape. When Lance was removed from his cell to be taken to the "Hospital", semi-delirious, realizing this meant death, Lance called out " Dad! Help Me. I need help". He died on Jan. 22nd, 1968. Capt. Gruters made the recommendation for the award of the Medal Of Honor. He drafted it while waiting for transport from Hanoi in March 1973.

Interesting (to me) aside. "Into the Mouth of the Cat" is from a patch us B-57 crews also at Danang wore that had flown at night under flare ships to attack the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Lance had mentioned in a letter home that his combat was like flying into the mouth of the cat.

This record of true heroism at many levels, particularly Lance's faithful adherence to the Code of Conduct is pure inspiration that will lift and guide all who enter his world. Spread the word.

The book is listed on Amazon. The reviews, even one critical one, are thought provoking.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3I1hft2INzs> 27 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL0IKMv-Bn0> 5 minutes

