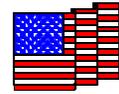




TAC Tanker Tales



Volume 3 Issue 4

June 2003

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LEARNING THE TRADE IN PEORIA

By Nate Hill

Memorial Day is past so I guess we are officially doing the summer thing. Your staff was very fortunate to attend a conference for military reunion planners last month in Peoria, IL, conducted by The Reunion Network. They say that "ignorance is bliss" and after the conference I felt "blistered." I guess that we have been blessed with dumb luck for the first 3 reunions.

First, I must say that it is gratifying that TRN is dedicated to military reunion planners and helps us plan so that we get the most for our money at places that really want us there. In addition, we found out what the pitfalls are when dealing with contracts, tours, banquets, hospitality rooms and all of the things we have assumed just fell into place by themselves. Also, the most important information that was discussed was personal and association liability.

Of course, we all know how society feels about alcohol and reunions are no different when it comes to liability. Amazing to find out that if a donation bucket is on the table for beer or wine that we bring into the Hospitality Room, the legal folks consider that "selling liquor without a license" and someone can go to jail. We also found out that there is an insurance policy available to cover us and we will have one for the California Bash.

Speaking of California, when we got home from our trip, we were expecting many registrations to be waiting for us. Very disappointing that the time is roaring up on us and everyone is procrastinating. There are only 60 days until the cut-off (Aug.28) so you need to get your reservations made with the Rohnert Park DoubleTree ASAP. If you have lost your registration packet and need an other, call me. After leaving the conference in Peoria, we made another swing toward New England to visit folks and family. We saw Ernie Sellers (421) in the St. Louis area, lunched with Ted and Betty Buck (421) n Mt. Vernon, IL, visited with Kenny and Peg Roberts (431) in the hospital near Harrisburg, PA, had lunch with Alan and Dolores Yerger (421) in Valley View, PA, and got a new set of tires for our RV from Earl Bazley (421, 622) in Monson, MA.

I am looking forward to seeing all you "Left Coasters" that have not been able to get to the previous reunions. See you all in the Fall.

Photos left to right:

Ted and Betty Buck; Alan and Dolores Yerger, Ernie Sellers.

Sweet Potato Queen Festival and Micro-mini 421st Air Refuelers Reunion By Jim Boyington

We'll begin our story with arrival at the home of Tom and Bobbye Blake. Bobbe and I had flown into Memphis via Covington KY. We stayed in Covington two nights and spent an evening with our oldest son Bill, a pilot with Comair. We then flew to Memphis where Bobbye picked us up and drove us to their home and horse ranch in Cherry Valley, AR. (Tom threw that in because he recently bought the great grandson of Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew to stand as Stud to the outstanding thoroughbred mares in the area.) Frank and Arda Boggs joined us there. Burns poem. After a few drinks, we enjoyed a super dinner and then settle down to reminisce.

The original crew was to include Walt & Cheryl Ratliff, Herb & Arlene Pyle, Bill & Annella Szanyi, Ralph & Betty Kelley, Nate & Natalie Hill, Tom & Joyce Grey, Rod & Jane Schroeder, Art & Maxine Belenzon, Malcolm O'Neal, Louis Smith, and Jack & Judy Ellison. Unfortunately, other commitments preempted their joining us. The Pyle's couldn't make it because Herb had to undergo emergency quadruple by-pass surgery. He's on the mend and back home now sporting a new pacemaker. Arlene welcomes your emails at herbpyle@eaze.net to help her keep him entertained.

The next morning, we boarded the van Tom had leased and headed for Jackson, MS. We stopped at a "Big Boy" and had some breakfast. Tom tried to trick the waitress into serving us champagne, but she handled this Tomfoolery very gracefully. Once we started down the road, Bobbe got out a map and tour guide and noted that there was a bakery that had been featured on Food TV in a town just a few miles off the highway. Ever gallant, Tom accommodated her, so off we went. The Bottletree Bakery in Oxford MS, near the Old Miss Campus lived up to its reputation. We picked up a couple of pies and some great bread. We had a hard time finding room to store this addition in the van. Bobbe and I had baggage for the week, because we would be going on to Florida to visit AF friends there. I had been whining about the side trip, so Arda and Bobbye gave me a hug to shut me up.

Finally arriving in Jackson, we checked in and proceeded to Jim and Jean Caddell's room for drinks and snacks. Art and Leslie Azamar had learned about the refreshments and joined in the fun. Ralph Holcomb, a friend of Tom's from way back, who can't resist a festival joined us from New Orleans. His expertise on how to troll for beads and a bunch of beads he had left over from Mardi Gras got us off to a great start. This brought our strength up to eleven. We suited up in our costumes and went to dinner. Bobbye and Arda had Dorothy outfits complete with Toto the dog. All the guys except me went as scarecrows. The theme of the Ball was "Irish I was in the Land of Oz, because, because, because." The original plan was for Bobbe to go as the Wicked Witch of the West, but she decided it would be smarter to rest than to continue a late night of merriment. So, I wore the witch outfit and joined co-witch Leslie and our band of merry folks from the Land of Oz.

We piled into a couple of cabs and proceeded to Hals and Mals, the official bar for SPQ gatherings. We encountered many interesting people. Some had originally come to satisfy their curiosity, but had become a bit over enthusiastic and become curiosities. Several "Wannabee Queens" were getting ready to leave. They had great difficulty splitting the check which delayed their departure many minutes. It was obvious seating was at a premium, and our party was eager to get a table. After several minutes passed, I asked if I could take their picture. (All Wannabees want their picture taken more than anything else in the world.) I snapped the photo and mentioned that I already had taken pictures of the other half of the horses. They were not amused and said that my crude remark would just inspire them to linger longer. Not wanting to antagonize them further, I beat a hasty retreat. In spite of my witty remarks, they finally left and our gang got to sit down. Frank ran into a Hottie and we had to take her picture. Likewise, we accommodated some more Wannabees and shot them too.

The next morning we gathered in the lobby for breakfast. Tom and Bobbye had switched to their King and Queen America outfits. Very classy. We piled into Tom's van and proceeded to the scene of the crime. The ladies purchased some "must have" items such as tiaras, boas and hats. We bumped into a military wife who complimented Tom and Bobbye on their super patriotic garb. She looked pretty classy herself, so we shot her and have since sent her the picture to forward to her husband fighting in Iraq. She's replied with a very appreciative email. Even dogs got into the act, so we shot them too. We managed to get a shady spot to watch the parade. The concrete steps left something to be desired, but as my pappy said, "never stand up when you can sit down, never sit down when you can lay down." The parade was well done. The folks were really into the spirit of the day and showed tons of imagination. Whole lot of beads being tossed. Since I was in the super "Wizard" costume (I had ditched the broom) I got a bunch. The SPQ Ball followed, and a ball it was.

If you ever feel the need to join some people having real fun get together some friends and toddle on down to Jackson, MS, around the middle weekend of March and join the Sweet Potato Queens in the celebration of St. Patrick's Day. It's genuine. Be careful though, because it's also highly contagious. If you want to know more, read *The Sweet Potato Queens Book Of Love* and go to their web site at www.sweetpotatoqueens.com.

The President's Corner By Dan Weber

At last summer has arrived and many of us are planning our vacations to scenic spots or perhaps just a trip somewhere to see the grandkids. I hope that all of you hitting the road this summer will have a pleasant and relaxful trip. But there is another opportunity for a trip in late September and that is to attend a reunion of our organization in the wine country's Sonoma Valley. Nate and Natalie have worked hard on this for the membership and I hope that those of you thinking about attending will get the registration forms and hotel reservations made post haste. Time is running out and while we have written about this in the newsletter, as well as via e-mail, and mailed out registration packets long ago, the response has been rather slow. I know many of us are still thinking about our summer plans, but we have to fast forward to early fall.

We would like to see a big turn out for this reunion especially because it is in response to a number of past comments about not having a reunion on the West Coast. Well, here it is! I have been disappointed in the past about folks living close by to our reunion sites and not bothering to even stop by and say hello. This will be a great opportunity for those of us in the West or on the "Left Coast" to have a 'max effort.'

In a previous newsletter I mentioned a few 800 numbers and web site URLs for info in regards to the Sonoma reunion and I'll repeat them. The State of California has a lovely guide titled *California 2003 which can be ordered on line at www.visitcalifornia.com* or by calling the State Tourism Office at (800) 862-2543. Sonoma

County, where we will be staying, has a free visitor's guide and this too can be ordered on line at www.sonomacounty.com or by calling (800) 576-662. If anyone enjoys a glass of wine besides myself then you might want to contact the Sonoma County Wineries Association for their free guide. On line they can be reached at www.sonomawine.com or by calling (800) 939-7666. We will have the opportunity to visit a few of the many wineries with the tours that have been set up by N & N. Lastly, the DoubleTree where we will be staying has a web site at www.dtsonoma.com.



The dedication of the Refueling Operators Memorial at Altus AFB occurred on schedule and our Titus Owen and TP Fowler attended to represent the TAC Tankers Association. Our Historian, John Bessette, provided the names of those in TAC KB-29s and KB-50s who lost their lives in the performance of their duties. The write up on the dedication plus some photos may be found on page 4. Our request for money from the TTAL membership exceeded our expectations and we thank all of you who sent in checks for the memorial.

Once again, please get those hotel reservations made and the completed registration forms and checks back to Nate. Barb and I wish all of you a very pleasant summer and we look forward to doing a little wine tasting with you in late September.

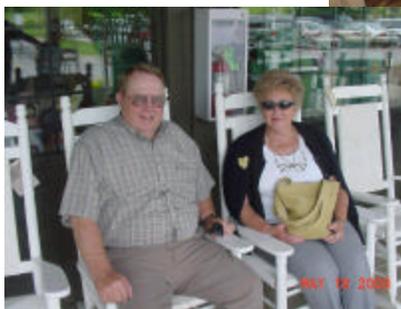
Dan W.

New Life Members	
Chapman, Lockeford CA-421(New)	Louis
Gerald Ragas, Buras LA-427	Zenon
Siekirski, Hampton VA-420, 429	Louis Smith,
Tallahassee FL-420,421,431	T.O. Williams,
Blacksburg VA-421,429	
Welcome New Members	
Don Selby, Canton OH-420	
Laurence E. Truman, Madison AL-420	

The TAC Tanker Store for Wine Country

Our squadron patches are here for the TAC Tankers, 420, 421, 429, 431, and 622nd and will be sold at the Reunion. Those of you wishing to have a 427th patch contact Gil Switzer (912) 922-0701. These patches may be used for caps, shirts, or jackets. Should you wish to have them mailed (the first group), they are \$5.00 which includes postage. At the reunion the price will be cheaper.

We also will have special caps for the men and visors for the ladies along with shirts with our TTL emblem all for sale.





Update on the Fall 2003 Mini-Reunion — “A Taste of Wine Country— California” By Natalie Hill

Well the packets went out and, hopefully, with all the heads-up information put in the last several issues, everyone is well aware of the dates, costs, etc for our “Taste of Wine Country” Reunion in the fall.

Since you have the itinerary in hand (plus the last column), I would like to share some other things not mentioned to date. As you know Nate and I journeyed out to Sonoma last August to gather all the menus, prices, tours and so forth to get the agenda set and offer you some options. However, when making contact early this year, with both the hotel and Delta Club at Travis, they told me the MENUS had been changed somewhat. Panic set in, but not for long as I pleaded that we had already set up the packets with meal choices, so..... They will be offering us what was mentioned in the packet. Only change was the Banquet, where they said it would be much simpler to just have one type salad so that will be the regular garden salad. (Apologies to those Caesar fans)

By the way, if there are any SPECIAL DIET NEEDS we should be notified a month early to be sure the chef is alerted.. Color coded meal tickets will be in your Registration folders for you to use at both meals. Those of you who have joined us for the past two reunions know The Drill.

My next item of concern was the GOLF OUTING on Sunday. I put the nearby Golf Course telephone number on the Schedule mainly to let you know how to get further information. Nate and I aren't golfers, but know that many of you would like to indulge. Sunday may not be your best day, but if you find others who would like to get up a foursome, eightsome, etc, we hope that you will do so. We have prizes planned for any categories you indicate. If anyone out there would like to do some organizing, please contact me and I will be sure there is a sign up in the Hospitality Room

Speaking of the HOSPITALITY ROOM. If you have read Nate's article on Page One, you will note that we learned a few tips about having a “Social Gathering” with spirits. Thus, we are considering having a cash bar during our Welcome Reception Sunday evening and/or a hotel waitress or two mingle and get drink orders. We have to get permission to bring in our own non-alcoholic beverages and food items, which we will take care of in our discussions with the hotel.

The TOURS being offered are going to be closed in early August so that we may confirm the number of buses needed for each day. Anyone who wishes to join a tour after that time will be on a space available only, so please be sure your “reservations” are made early as we don't want to leave anyone behind when the bus drives away. So far the Sonoma and Healdsburg tours are the most popular.

We will be journeying out to California in Mid September in the RV as there is no way our car would hold all the goodies we have to bring: Registration Envelopes, Door prizes, Banquet center pieces, some grape/wine type quilts, clothing, refreshments, etc. We WILL be in the hotel and parking the RV outside, so as to be available for any questions and problems that may arise. We want YOU to enjoy this area of our country as it is spectacular!!!!!!

Facts to Know About Sonoma County

Sonoma Valley is called the “Birthplace of the California wine industry. **Kenwood** is the home of Sugarloaf Ridge State Park while **Glen Ellen** has the Jack London State Park where The Call of the Wild author lived. The area is also noted for its hot springs resorts in the early 1900's.

Sonoma is the historical site of the capital of the independent Republic of California and the Bear Flag Revolt of 1846. Located near the Plaza is the Mission San Francisco Solano De Sonoma (1823), the barracks of the Mexican army (1836) and the home of Gen. Mariano Vallejo (1851).

Petaluma to the east is a town loved by filmmakers (**American Graffiti** and **Peggy Sue Got Married**) and a showcase of Victorian homes in the historic center which escaped the 1906 earthquake. Heading northward we find **Cotati**, two miles square and the “Hub of the County.” Next is **Rohnert Park** (base for our reunion) which is one of the largest landscaped cities in California. Golf, a performing arts center and the location of the scenic campus of Sonoma State University.

Santa Rosa, north on Rt.101 is dubbed the “City Designed for Living.” It was the home of horticulturist Luther Burbank and “Peanuts” creator, Charles M. Schulz. There is the Railroad Square Historic Center and aviation enthusiasts may enjoy the Pacific Coast Air Museum. We run into **Windsor** on up 101 which was named in 1855 for the grounds surrounding Windsor Castle in England because of the area's pastoral beauty. It produces a \$269 million wine crop with over 50 wineries in a 5 mile radius. It also hosts the county's Hot Air Balloon Classic.

Healdsburg is nestled between the famous Alexander, Russian River and Dry Creek valleys and is surrounded by over 60 wineries. It has small town charm with Spanish-style plaza plus Lake Sonoma, a 2,700 acre lake. On north is **Geyserville** with its casual Old West personality and buildings from the 1800's. Part of the Alexander Valley is known for its prunes, pears and apples. **Cloverdale** is the last town on Rt.101 in the county and has the North Coast Wine and Visitors Center plus easy access to the Redwood Forest, Russian River and northern California Coastline.

West of Santa Rosa is **Sebastopol**, Wine Country's “farm-fresh and family-friendly” community. Apple orchards, plus an eclectic mix of cafes, specialty stores, new age shops, bookstores and antiques are found here. This part of the county also includes the rural towns of **Forestville**, **Graton**, **Occidental**, **Freestone** and **Valley Ford**.

The most well-known of the Coastline is **Bodega Bay**, a fishing village and the inland town of **Bodega**, where Alfred Hitchcock filmed The Birds. The Sonoma Coast beaches stretch 13 miles from Bodega Bay to the Russian River touching the areas of **Jenner** and **Ft. Ross**.

Looking at the Sonoma County Calendar during the end of September and the first week of October there seems to be plenty of activity including the Valley of the Moon Vintage Fest, the Downtown Petaluma Antique Faire, the Annual Beer, Sausage and Chile Fest in Napa and the Alexander Valley Winegrowers First Weekend Event. It is Harvest Time in the Valley and hopefully we can catch some wine crushing.



'Boomers' (Refueling Operators) Symposium and Memorial Report

As planned, the Boomers Association held its annual meeting at Altus AFB, Oklahoma on 25-27 April 2003. The "Boomers Association," is a group of active duty and former air refueling operators, who hosted their annual gathering this year at the home of the USAF's air refueling training operations. This year, a special memorial was dedicated to all air refueling operators who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Actual groundbreaking for the memorial took place last November sparked by the efforts of MSgt Dave Monk, an active-duty instructor at Altus.

Among the more than 135 aircrew to be honored will be the 26 KB-29 and KB-50 tactical tanker RO's who lost their lives in twelve accidents between 1957 and 1964. Below is a list of all those men honored:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| KB-29 Super Fortress | 7 Jul 51- |
| TSgt Henry H. Hill, | 1stLt Jack |
| W. Kern, | Cpl |
| Reginald F. Russell, | SSgt Scott |
| L. Wallace | 10 Jul 53- |
| Sgt Walter F. Olsen | 26 Dec 56- |
| TSgt Thurman Ranier | 10 Jan 57- |
| TSgt Edward C. Clemons, | |
| SSgt Michael B. McIntosh | 2 Feb 57- |
| MSgt Lawrence M. Grigory, | A2C |
| Arthur B. Kosier, | A3C Frank- |
| lin D. Schweigert | KB-50 Super For- |
| | tress |
| Robert E. Craig, | A2C Billy |
| B. Rose | 8 May 57 - A3C Don- |
| ald E. Cospel, | SSgt Thomas E. |
| O'Connor | 13 Aug 58 - A2C Francis C. |
| Hermance Jr., | SSgt Norbert T. |
| Knulty | 22 Jan 59 - A2C Ignacio W. |
| Sanchez, | TSgt Wayne M. |
| Souder | 4 Aug 59 - A2C Thomas M. |
| Payton | 18 Oct 60 - SSgt Hardin A. |
| Bailey, | A2C Thomas J. Lane, |
| | A3C Michael W. Miller |
| Mar 61 - | SSgt Harold D. Meeusen, |
| | A2C Clifton C. Tabor |
| Jan 62 - | A2C Paul M. Clawson, |
| A2C Carlton A. Link, | SSgt Billie |
| D. Moore | 9 Feb 62 - A1C Guy |
| Powell, | A2C Ralph E. Reutz |
| 20 Dec 62 - | SSgt Robert T. Craig, |
| | SSgt James R. Hayes |
| Aug 64 - | SSgt Walter B. Hickman Jr., |
| SSgt Carey A. Livingston. | |

Representing the TAC Tanker



Association at the festivities were Titus Owen (429th), and TP Fowler (421st), our photographers. Historian John Bessette was instrumental in supplying the 29 names of our KB-29 and KB-50 crew members.

MSgt Dave Monk, the Memorial coordinator dropped us a line thanking our group for its participation and contribution to the marble monument. He added "The dedication was a HUGE success, we read all 113 names, the wing commander and I placed a wreath after we unveiled the memorial, 21 gun salute, bugler played taps, there was a fly-by from a KC-135R with the boom down, and cake and punch afterwards.

"I estimate about 500 peo-

ple showed up for the dedication, not a dry eye in the crowd. Listening to the many stories after was a real treat."

The Boomers Assn. published a very informative newsletter called Midwest Boom News and Picnic Notice which many of you may receive. Roy Marler sent us a copy and it was impressive to learn of all the many activities of their organization. News of picnics, golf outings, the 2003 Symposium report, Monk's report, and reunion news INCLUDING a plug for our reunion in Sonoma. Thanks., Roy!



THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES
(June 14th)

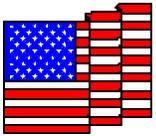
I am the flag of the United States of America
My name is Old Glory.
I fly atop of the world's tallest buildings.
I stand watch in America's halls of justice.
I fly majestically over institutions of learning.
I stand guard with power in the world.
Look up and see me.

I stand for peace, honor, truth and justice.
I stand for freedom
I am confident. I am arrogant. I am proud.

When I am flown with my fellow banners,
My head is a little higher,
My colors a little truer.

I bow to no one!

Author Unknown.



Letters Received From Our Newer Members

Editor's Note: This is a continuation of the column begun in the last issue.

Gerald A. Brooks of Woodland Hills CA (March 2003)

Retired and living the good Life in So. Calif. (winters) and Summit County, CO (summers) plus a couple months during the year in Boise ID. I was one of the first navigators assigned to the 427th at Warner Robins GA and I designed the original logo with the flying St. Bernard.

Louis H. Chapman of Lockeford CA (March 2003)

Last duty station- Turner AFB, Albany, GA 1960-62, Discharged June '62. Returned home to So. California and employed by Certified Grocers of Calif.- worked warehouse and as a driver. Married 1965 and have 2 sons and 6 grandchildren. Wife deceased in 1990, remarried 1994. Transferred to No. Calif. in 1989 and retired in 1999. Enjoy fishing, bowling, and RV travel. Time and attention divided between wife, 3 dogs and 2 horses. Life is Good!

Robert W. Harris of Seattle WA (July 2002)

Retired April, 1972, 4 years 3rd AF (UK), 1 year Viet Nam, 8 years Air Material Command, 7 years in TAC Tanks. Enjoying life in beautiful Seattle now that summer weather is here. (In 431, 427, 429, and 622.)

Hugh G. (Gene) Howell of Maryville TN (2001)

I was with the 306th AREFS at Mac Dill AFB, Tampa FL and a refueling operator in the 420th AREFS at Sculthorpe, England (12/56-10/59). I worked for Norfolk Southern Railroad for 30 years. I retired last Sept. I was born in Alabama and lived in Atlanta for 5 years before moving to Maryville in 1969. Been here ever since.

Archie L. Kirkham of Longwood FL (2001)

Married 42 years, 7 children, 11 grandchildren. Master carpenter, retired. Hobbies: fishing. (*Won the award for most grandchildren at the Tampa Reunion*)

Keith Michal of Pharr TX (2001)

Retired from teaching at Ohio State University. I was in the 429th from 1956-1959 serving as a pilot.

Horace J.A. Odom of

Ontario CA (May 2002)

I spent six years at Langley, arriving in 1959 and leaving in 1965. I was grounded for an enlarged heart. I was then assigned to Aerospace Ground Equipment as an AGE repairman. I retired in March '72 at Travis ARB, CA after going into Project Transition to be trained as a Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator. After spending 20 year, 14 days, I went to work for Los Angeles County Sanitation District as a WTPO. I finally retired after 20 years with LA County. I am now in permanent retirement pursuing my hobby as a photographer.

Don A. Selby of Canton Ohio (April 2003)

Served with the 420th AREFS between 1957 and 1960 at RAF Sta. Sculthorpe, England. I worked in the Sqdn Office as a personnel clerk before being assigned to the 47th Bomb Wing Hqtrs. I am semi-retired, but still keep busy in my

antique refinishing business. Married with one son who is currently pursuing a PhD in History. Currently active in a Military Re-enactment Group. I am portraying a combat cameraman during WWII in Germany and also an Airman from my period of service. The uniform depends on the activity.

Tobey P. Smith of Goodlettsville TN (February 2002)

Went in the AF in March of '62, Lackland AFB, San Antonio, TX and from there to Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, TX to attend aircraft general school. Then went to the best AF Squadron in the US, or at least I think so. In the 431st I was assigned to SSgt Jerry Walker as his asst. crew chief. After a few months, Sgt Walker was reassigned and I became the crew chief of A/C 49-380. I went to many places on that Plane: Hawaii, California, Bermuda, Azores, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, etc.

I was placed on flying status and was flying in a SAC KC-135 watching the boom operator refuel a B-52 when President John Kennedy was shot in Texas (to get my time for flight pay). After the 431st was dissolved I went to the 314th Troop Carrier Wing at Sewart AFB, TN and chose discharge. I went to work for a construction company, then went back to Conn. With my wife and got a job at Avco Lycoming in Stratford, building L13 and L15 jet engines for Huey Cobra's in the Vietnam War. At the same time I was a part-time/full-time police officer in Seymour, CT.

Six years later we moved back to Nashville, TN where I held several different jobs until I went to work in a food warehouse which sold out to another and they in turn sold out to Fleming Foods which no supplies all food to K-Mart stores. I have been with Fleming for 15/2 years and also have my own home improvement company. My wife and I have been married since May 1966 and have been through many things together: her cancer and arthritis.

Ralph E. Squire of Westminster CO (September 2001)

Married Gloria 6/24/61-40 years. Have 5 children (3 girls and 2 boys) and 11 grandchildren. Owned a small grocery store and was the Town Marshall/water system maintenance & collection/street maintenance & snow removal for the town of Westcliffe before getting into the Rural Electric where I started as a Lineman. Went from Engineering to Operations Manager to to General Manager then to Asst. Gen Mgr. Of Western United Electric Supply which is the Co-op owned electric utility materials supply house for the mountain states. Retired 3/31/01.

(Dec 2002)

Laurence E. Truman of Madison AL
I entered the USAF Jan. 6, '55 and retired at Scott AFB, Belleville, IL Nov. 1, 1981. I was a Reciprocating Engine Mechanic for 19 years and spent my last 8 years as a Jet Engine Mechanic. I helped close RAF Bovington '62 and was transferred to RAF Sculthorpe in Dec. '62. I was there when we transferred all the KB-50s back to the states. I left RAF Sculthorpe in May '64. I went to work for Civil Service in St. Louis in Feb '82 with the Army. I got moved in '97 to Huntsville AL where I retired from Civil Service, Oct. 2001. Since then I spend most of the time working with the VFW, VVA, DAV and American Legion.

To be continued next issue.....



Recollections Continued

By "Walt" Larimer, USAF Retired, Navigator
420th AREFS, 1957-59

I was assigned to the 420th Air Refueling Squadron, RAF Sculthorpe, Norfolk, England from 1957 through 1959 as a KB-50 and KB-50J navigator. The 420th was a wonderful fling organization with which to be associated. If you enjoyed flying, there were plenty of opportunities to accumulate lots of flying hours. We supported all the F-100, F-101, and B/RB-66 air refueling requirements in the USAFE operational area which, very often, required numerous TDYs to Spain, Italy, Libya, and Morocco.

The inclement flying conditions during winter in North and Central Europe, frequently required the fighter wings to deploy to sunny bases in the Southern USAFE area to carry out their daily bombing and gunnery proficiency requirements. The 420th was the only probe-and-drogue air fueling outfit in Europe and thus was the only organization available to support these USAFE air refueling missions as well as those over the Azores Islands during the many deployments of F-100 and B/RB-66 Wings to and from the USAFE area.

Most of the aircraft commanders in the 420th were older men and were extremely proficient in both leadership and flying skills. Most had SAC KC-97 backgrounds and thousands of hours in the SAC bomber air refueling business. They knew and sincerely appreciated the importance of crew integrity and individual crewmember professionalism. Prior to my assignment to the 420th, my previous operational background had been largely in TAC light bomber aircraft (B-26s and B/RB-57s).

Several of my pilots in light bombers, including some "combat seasoned" in Korea, seemed to me to be too "happy-go-lucky." Several took unwarranted risks to show off their flying abilities and (careless) courage. Quite understandably, these same light bomber pilots were prone to aircraft incidents and accidents.

Before I had accumulated a total of 1000 hours as a young Air Force navigator/bombardier in TAC's light bombers, I had been involved in five major aircraft accidents. Two of these accidents required jet bailouts under very perilous circumstances. Fortunately, I only incurred minor injuries but these accidents left me with the distinct impression that this particular TAC bomber squadron had a few pilots that were literally and figuratively "accidents looking for a place to occur."

Thus, it was a very pleasant experience for me to come to the 420th and find intellectually sober, serious, and very experienced aircraft commanders who flew "by-the-book" and resolved every genuine and simulated airborne emergency with cool and steady expertise. Our

Small World Item from Bob (Willy) Wilhite
On April 20, 2003, Willy wrote the following in our TAC Tankers Guestbook on the Website. I live in north central Wisconsin, actually rural Scandinavia, WI. Went to South Bend, IN to visit daughter and grandkids for Easter. Stopped for breakfast at a little café on south side of South Bend (at Sally's). There was a gent wearing a retired AF patch on his jacket. I had retired AF cap. Anyway it was Herbert Crone who was in the 622nd. I was in the 421st. We both belong to this organization. What's the chances?

squadron commander insisted that flying safety be deeply embedded in and practiced by all crew members.

In the 420th, every crewmember on our KB-50/KB-50J was expected to carry out his duties with excellence, pride, and professionalism. The finest aircraft commander I ever had in my operational career was the one I had in the 420th and, unfortunately, I have not had contact with him since that time 42 years ago. Hopefully, becoming a member of the TAC Tankers Association, will help me locate that long lost crewmember and friend. In my final year at RAF Sculthorpe, my crew was selected to be the Squadron's Standboard Evaluation crew and in that capacity, we flew with all the other KB-50J crews in order to check out their proficiency. This gave me the opportunity to really know, understand, and appreciate the flying abilities of most all the aircrew members within the 420th. It also gave me the opportunity to witness and participate in several different and very memorable air refueling missions collecting several interesting stories along the way.

While stationed in England, I applied for postgraduate training at the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), Wright-Patterson AFB, OH and, at the end of my tour in England, was transferred to AFIT to undertake this training. This postgraduate training essentially ended my operational career and, except for my tour in Southeast Asia (1969-1970), the remainder of my Air Force career was involved in research and development, program management, and acquisition management at higher headquarters, Headquarters USAF, and as a "purple suiter" within the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

After AFIT graduation in 1960, my first job assignment was with the B-58 Systems Program Office, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH as a program manager for avionics equipment being designed, produced, and installed in the supersonic B-58 "Hustler" aircraft. That assignment marked my first assignment and living experience in Ohio with two more to follow in later years.

I retired from the USAF in 1983 with over 31 years of active duty and resided in the Northern Virginia area at the time. Following Air Force retirement, I was employed by Litton Guidance & Control Systems Division (of Litton Industries, Inc.) in Washington, DC, as their Director for Air Force Requirements. Then, in 1991, Litton requested that I move to the Dayton area, to become their Midwest Region Manager, and to manage their Dayton, Ohio office. I retired from Litton Industries in 1997, but have remained busy ever since pursuing my hobbies (gardening, locksmithing, and traveling).

Greetings from the Bahamas! (Another Mini) Ed

& Judi Call and Frank & Joyce Gaweil joined Ed (Ted) & Judy Clisby at their condo on Treasure Cay, Abaco, an island just east of Grand Bahama. Ted brings everyone over in his Beech Debonair, one couple at a time. Many of the 427th became 774th Troop Carrier at LAFB, VA. So Ralph & Jane Galante of the 774th also joined us. We enjoyed a week of fresh sea food, great beach sitting and walking, bike riding, boat trip to Green Turtle Cay (where Ed Call's daughter, Amy, got married many years ago), and a fun filled game of dominoes every night. Tom & Sue Westhafer could not make it this year, due to a building project at home. It looks like it could be an annual event.

Bits and Obits

Word was received from Polly Donner that Paul Donner of the 421st died on March 24, 2003 due to congestive heart failure and diabetes. He was a resident of Navarre, FL.

A note from Bill Dekker in Fairfield CA: "On the 4th of April, I wasn't feeling too perky. I admitted myself into Kaiser in Vallejo, CA. They sent me to San Francisco for an angiogram. I went into operating room the next morning. They sliced me and diced me and left me with quad bypass. I got home today (4/15/03). Everything worked out OK. I don't remember what went on between the 5th and 15th. I am on vicodan and still a little bit goofy. I had 68 emails waiting for me so I am taking the easy way out and answering enmass. I will be down for about 8 weeks. Keep the mail coming, but not too many corny jokes. To all those that already knew thru word of mouth, thank you for all the cards and prayers. I love you all, Bill"—this was an email sent to friends and several TAC Tankers.

Major(RET) Frank J. Gorski Jr. passed away 2 May 2003 at the Swedish Medial Center in Seattle WA. There was a funeral mass at St. Thomas Catholic Church in Tukwila WA. Frank's final resting place was to be at the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Union Grove WI. The announcement came from "the Gorski Boys and Sue."

Last issue we reported the passing of Lorraine Polson. Now we hear from Maggi Iverson once more with news that Lt.Col. (Ret.) Warren Polson left us on May 1, 2003 in Navarre, FL. "This is a very special man, we will miss both Warren and his wife Lorraine," notes Maggi.



Pictured above with the 622nd Reunion in Tampa:

Kneeling: Dick Hilty, Stan Lee, John Needham, Bob Cleckler, Dick VanderHaidan, Gene Ficken, and Fred Hagan.

Standing: Snuffy Smith, Bones Kanter, Charlie Harrell, Boyce Mayo, Herb Crone, Walker Cullop, Dan O'Shea, Arlin Anderson, Druby Robichaux, Peon Fleenor, John Robida, John Barr, Roger Tollefson, Burl S. Holdt, Jerry Abbe and Tom Powers.

I'M GLAD YOU ARE IN MY DASH —

I read of a man who stood to speak
 At the funeral of a friend
 He referred to the dates on his tombstone
 From the beginning...to the end.
 He noted that
 first came his date of birth
 And spoke the following
 date with tears,
 But he said what mattered most
 of all
 Was the dash between those years.
 (1934-1998) For that dash represents all the time
 That he spent alive on earth...
 And now only those who loved him
 Know what that little line is worth.
 For it matters not, how much we own;
 The cars...the house...the cash,
 What matters is how we live and love
 And how we spend our dash.
 So think about this long and hard...
 Are there things you'd like to change?
 For you never know how much time is left,
 That can still be rearranged.
 If we could just slow down enough
 To consider what's true and real,
 And always try to understand
 The way other people feel.
 And be less quick to anger,
 show appreciation more
 And love the people in our lives
 we've never loved before.
 If we treat each other with respect,
 And more often wear a smile...
 Remembering that this special dash
 May last only a little while.
 So, when your eulogy's being read
 With your life's actions to rehash...
 Would you be proud of the things they say
 About how you spent your dash?

Air Refuelers Revisit Base, Hold Reunion

(Here is an excerpt from an article in the Tampa Tribune sent to us by Bob Clecker (dated April 13, 2003)

Members of the 622nd Air Refueling Squadron returned to MacDill Air Force Base last week to remember 1962, when the squadron was sent from Louisiana to support bombers in Tampa during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

It's always nice to be welcomed back to bases," said Bob Clecker, 69, who retired from the Air Force as a master sergeant. "It feels at home there, and it's nice to meet the people that came after us."

Like the KC-135 Stratotankers now with the 6th Air Mobility Wing at MacDill, the members of the 622nd refueled planes of the time, flying KB-50s.

About 45 former members of the unit attended the Tampa reunion. The unit was based at England Air force Base in Louisiana from July 1955 to April

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