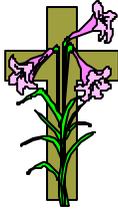


## Bits and Obits

On 27 November 2001, Margie, wife of Nate Hill, passed away after a long bout with breast cancer. Many of those with e-mail addresses were notified and the response (about 275) was very gratifying to him and his family. As Bill Eads remarked in his note: "As time goes on more of us will find ourselves forming that special bond with you. May we find comfort in each other."

On 10 December 2001, Aline, wife of Wayne Warner, of the 427th, passed away due to a cardiac arrest. It was their 46th Wedding Anniversary. She had been in declining health for many years, most recently with kidney failure. Wayne recalled a poem written by Michael Landon for a "Little House" episode that went: "Remember me with smiles and laughter for that is how I'll remember you all. But if you remember me only with tears, then don't remember me at all."

On the same date, Larry Waitt, a Life Member and a Navigator in the 429th and 4505th Wing HQ, passed away in his sleep. His widow, Bev, stated it was a sudden and unexpected death and they had been talking of attending the reunion in May.



### KB-50 MODEL OWNERS

It has been reported that a total of 22 TAC Tanker members are now proud owners of a customized KB-50. Included in the roster are:

Art Belezon	Art Boatright	Richard Clinton	Phil Collier	Fred Gardner	Marge Langford	Harvey Lee	Bob Peterson (winner of raffle in Tampa)	Ron Ramsey	Dean Robnett	Dave Scott	Bill Szanyi
Wendell Bourguignon	Houston Coleman	Frank Gawell	Gordie Jacobson	Pepe LeCuyer	John Morello	Kenneth Roberts	Rod Santos	Albert Simpson	Clarence Veino		

### **Who Says a Six Hour Mission Has to be Boring?**

*Here is an email from a Navy pilot in an F-18 Squadron. Not sure of the validity, but I think it is true. Little tongue in cheek bravado of young man who just survived and a little poking fun at AF, but in incredible story. Enjoy!*

Thought y'all might get a kick out of a recent experience of mine. In case anyone asks, flying around in an F18 without a canopy is bad for the skin. Twenty thousand feet over Afghanistan in an open air McDonnell Douglas Cabriolet is just a bad bad place. Air's real dry up there, causes the skin to dry out. That and the wind chill of course. 0130 launch. Fifth and final planned tanker rendezvous. Had 13.0 onboard, but wanted to run my wingman back through because he only had 10.0 or so with an hour and a half to recovery. Sun was not up (0600), but it was bright enough. My goggles and goggle bracket were both stowed. Tanker had finished consolidating a half hour before and had four receivers (including myself) immediately afterwards. I was the fifth guy to tank. The boom operator recycled the hose between me and number four and called "clear" before I tanked. Tanking appeared normal to me. Air was smooth.

Hose cut loose and I pulled the power back and picked up the nose in order to try and "ride the wave." Refueling probe did not feel too much stress based on vibrations I felt in the cockpit. Hose separated about seven feet up from the basket. KC10 take-up reel on the refueling hose didn't do it's job. Didn't take up.

After some wailing and flailing, the KC10 and I disconnected but I still had part of it with me. The basket and seven feet of hose. The hose had a ten pound fitting on it that was quickly revealed when the wind stripped off the rubber sheath from the hose. Once revealed it proceeded to beating the living shit out of my airplane. "This is gonna be bad, this is gonna be real bad," I thought. I was right.

After twenty sufficiently violent whacks, the canopy gave up the ghost. I never thought about what a shattering canopy would sound like. Up until then of course. I figured since it's made of plastic it shouldn't sound like glass. Wrong. Sounded just like when you go flying through a plate glass window. Of course, all the glass went out vice in. Cockpit went from eight grand to ambient in about a heartbeat. Which was a pretty small unit time right then.

Don't know exactly where the KC10 went. Last I saw him he was turning for the southwest, spewing gas in the air and spewing words over the radio. "Bossman" had no time for little 'ole me. One of his Air Force brethren was experiencing discomfort. Had to yell at him to get his attention. At first (before I put the top down), I thought I could make it home. "Okay, it's 650 away, I got 13.5... probably have to go pretty slow and kinda low. And that hunk o' shit on my nose can't be doing much for my gas mileage. This should warrant a ready deck. Yeah, one or two passes before they have to barricade me. And I ain't bolted yet, so..."

Descended about 3000 feet and decelerated to about 260 by the time the canopy blew. Then the glass shattered. "Okay, Jacobabad it is. My boarding rate at a 10,000 ft. airstrip is even better." Went down to about 19 K and put out the speed-brake. Fitting was still beating up the jet while passing through 240 knots. At about 230 the beatings

stopped and I started down, maintaining airspeed. Flight controls and engines appeared fine. Ball was a little out of center but that was it. Didn't have to turn to put JBAD on the nose. It was straight ahead. Nav system told me it was 260 NM away. My body told me it was pretty damn cold up there. The KC10 remains were still trying to get at my head so I started descending and decelerating (opposing states so I'm not sure I did either one that efficiently).

Leveled off at 12,000. I stopped getting beat up, the fitting just hung in the slipstream by my canopy bow, at 230 knots. So there I was...8,000 feet above Afghanistan at 230 knots. "You know, if a guy really wanted to get shot by a MANPAD, he'd fly a profile a lot like what I'm doing right now." Oh well, it's at times like this when you just make a decision and go with it. If you pull it off then it was, "...outstanding airmanship and in keeping with the highest tradition of the United States Naval Service..." If you don't pull it off, if you get bagged, well...maybe they'll name a safety award or the new Base Gym after you.

Managed to grab the piss bag that was flying around the cockpit and stuff it in my helmet bag. While stuffing other things away the in-flight Pac was ripped out of my hands. It went over the side in a flash. "Scotty's gonna hate that." Inlet temp read 3. Buffeting while hunkered down behind the glareshield wasn't that bad. My wingman was still with me through all this. Because of some late tankers and shuffling to get guys that were using our tanker to go further north, he only had 10K in gas so he definitely wasn't gonna make it back. Well, not definitely, he could still tank after all. But because of how I had to sit in the cockpit to minimize the wind blast, I needed him to watch over me. I was pretty much hunkered down for the ride at this point. Seat lowered, visor down, cockpit heat up full and hunched over staring at one of the TV screens in the cockpit. It's weird the thoughts that come to you during times like this. "You know sitting this close to the screen is bad for my eyes." Had to snicker over that one. I could look right and left and see the Afghanistan and then the Pakistan scenery slowly drifting by. Too slowly.

On the descent, the airplane's computer was displaying how long it would take me to get to the divert given my decelerating airspeed. "Okay, 20 minutes not bad I can do that no pro...oh 30 minutes now. Okay piece of cake...40!!! Shit." Settled out at forty-eight. In the end I didn't really look outside much. Just peeked over the dashboard every couple of minutes to make sure the velocity vector was on top of the upcoming ridgelines. This part of the world is not pretty by the way.

Once everyone realized the seriousness of the situation they started to talk to me. The AWACS switched me over to the E2 in charge of the south. They started relaying stuff I needed to tell the boat. The parts the jet would need in order to make a flight back out again. The fact that my wingman was going to make the 0900 recovery vice the 0730, stuff like that. "The boat wants to know how badly the canopy is cracked." I couldn't believe that one. I thought he would have heard all the wind in the cockpit and known. "It's not cracked, it's gone. I'm flying a convertible." Apparently that line made it through all the nets loud and clear.

The next day I was talking with the CSAR guys in Jbad and they said they got spun up when they read that on chat (it's all real time chat nowadays.) What did not get through was the driver of the convertible. I know the E2 guy knew who I was (the conversation by the end had degenerated to call signs. Gretzky and Duck. (cont. on page 8)