



TAC Tanker Tales



Volume 5 Issue 3

March 2005

Nashville: Just Around the Musical Corner

Well the pieces of the reunion puzzle are falling into place now that the hotel is receiving reservations and the TAC Tanker Headquarters is processing the many registrations. As of this writing we have met our room block quota as contracted and the Radisson will be extending more rooms at the rate of \$82 up to the April 10th deadline.

Nate has redone the TAC Tanker web site and you will note the names of those coming to Nashville listed. We will be adding to that as the future registrations arrive.

Our yellow registration forms have been arriving here (231 King Street, Lancaster OH 43130) gradually and we expect that March should be a landslide. We have about 25 signed up for a hotel room who are still due to send their sheets and checks to us. Hop to it folks!

As you know the “drill,” we make up a packet for everyone with all the necessary particulars included: agenda, tickets ordered, new 2005 Yellow Book and local brochures. The assembling takes time, so the earlier your form is returned the sooner we get things ready.

Incidentally, if you have any address or e-mail changes we don't know about, please get them to us before the end of this month when the Yellow Books go to press.

Our tours are filling up nicely and we have just about met all our minimums. Remember the March 10th deadline for the Chaffin Dinner Theater and the Wildhorse Saloon events. If you get this after the deadline please call us right away.

That's it until we meet in
Nashville. -Your Editor

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Memorial Update *By Dan Weber, Chairman, Board of Directors*

Our memorial work progresses and we are at a point where I believe we have pretty well decided what we will have etched on the stone.

The front side of the black stone will have at the top these words in caps: TAC TANKERS ASSOCIATION MEMORIAL 1953-1965. Below that will be an etching of a KB-50 with three receivers; an F-101 on the right reel, a B-66 on the tail reel and an F-100 on the left reel.

Beneath that we will have some more engraving with the first paragraph stating that the memorial is dedicated to the organizations and families of the personnel who supported in-flight refueling during the Cold War and Vietnam War. The second paragraph will mention the aircrews and support personnel who flew and maintained the KB-29s and KB-50s projecting tactical airpower around the globe.

The third paragraph will acknowledge that in-flight refueling was involved in TAC being awarded the MacKay Trophy in 1958. Below that will be the dedication date of May 2006 and to the right of the text paragraphs will be an etching of the MacKay Trophy.

The backside will have these words repeated "TAC TANKERS ASSOCIATION MEMORIAL- 1953-1965." Below that will be the etchings of the wing and squadron patches.

Very soon we will have the text and etching details worked out and then we will submit the ideato the stone company in Xenia, Ohio,for some cost estimates. Depending on these estimated costs we may modify some of the text engravings or photo etchings.

There will still be much to do such as getting the Museum's approval, finding a site in the Memorial Garden, and so on. In succeeding news letters we will keep the membership up to date on our progress on this worthy cause—our legacy..

Late Bulletin!! We now have the text and etching details mostly complete and our plan has been sent to the monument company in Xenia, OH for cost estimates. They have replied with the following figures: Black granite monument which is approximately six feet high by 4 feet wide— \$11,900; Etching the above information on the monument— \$2500; Concrete to provide walks and landscaping around monument—\$2500; State sales tax— \$1138.

You can see that to provide our legacy to the world is not going to be cheap and since it is the only recognition we will ever get we sure do not want it to look paltry. Given these figures, the staff welcomes any and all financial help with the funding. When you see the final product at the dedication next year, I am sure you will agree that a \$100 donation or more would be appropriate.

The President's Corner *By Bill Wolford*

Greetings from a snowy, cold, brrrrr Vermont.

The ground hog has seen his shadow and it looks like he was certainly right this time. We know that spring is inevitably on the way and can hardly wait for it. Our daughter Fran, who is at Goodfellow AFB in Texas had the audacity to tell us she was wearing shorts outside to take a walk, while we on the other hand are still wearing many layers to keep warm.

As many of you know, I manage a couple of H&R Block tax offices and am very busy from the 3rd of January until the 15th of April. Our offices are open 9 to 9, seven days a week which keeps me from giving Shirley too hard a time. (note from Shirley: It's actually worse than being a golf widow, but at least it's only for a few months). Although the hours are long, I enjoy the work and the camaraderie which I've built up over the past seven years. But I must say, I'm glad when April 15th gets here.

We are eagerly looking forward to the reunion in Nashville in May. By then we hope the Memorial Committee will have the final photos of our memorial stone. So far all that I have seen looks just great. Congrats to Dan, Rufe, Ted and the rest of the crew. We hope there is enough time to have everything ready and in place by the 2006 Reunion.

The Nashville reunion should be a great time. It's a beautiful setting and Natalie has lined up many outstanding extras for everyone. We were fortunate to visit this area last year with Nate and Natalie and I think there is something there to interest each of us.

It's time for us to remember all the men and women in the military serving our country so well even though the media tries to belittle and demean their selfless efforts on behalf of others. Please keep them in your prayers and also the many of our members who are suffering the 'ravages' of older age.

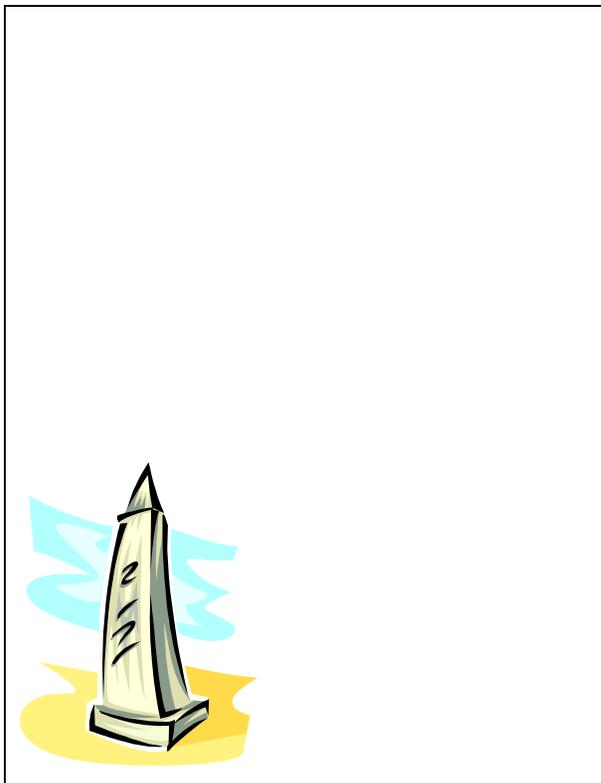
Best regards to all, Bill Wolford

New Life Members

Larry A. Apel, Lincoln NE-429
Carl W. Baumann, Vacaville CA-427,429
Robert N. Beaty, Louisville KY-431
Jack E. Boehm, Sarasota FL-429,420
Joel H. Chamberlain, Redondo Bch CA-431
John R. Clyde, Highland UT-431
Herb L. Crone, South Bend IN-622
Jack Dawson, Mena AR-421
Bill F. Eads, Leesburg FL-421
Ron D. Engle, McFarland WI-421
Eugene M. Ficken, Berlin WI-622
Britt Glover, Venice FL-431
Bobby Gwaltney, Woodstock GA-420,622
John D. Halm, Ackworth GA-421
Charles Hpopvich, Felton DE-429
Howard L. Mathews, Lake Charles LA-420
Harold F. McAbee, Dawson Springs KY-622
Anne Mills, Lancaster PA (author)
Ron J. Morin, Oldsmar FL-429
Jack C. Nicewander, Bella Vista AR-429
Bobby E. Oliver, Sycamore GA-431
Jim W. Parker, Oklahoma City OK-431,420
Jerry F. Reed, Sykesville MD-429
Charles J. Regi, Dry Run PA-429
Roy C. Thompson, Woodburn OR-431
Bobby Yow, Ft. Worth TX-622

Welcome New Members

Ward L. Cole, Jacksonville FL-431
Gene L. Hollingan, Bryan TX-420
Bill Jackson, Colonial Beach VA-427
Terry R. Larson, El Paso TX-431
Anthony C. Pronier, Long Beach CA-431



Membership Report:

With our December Newsletter we sent out 125 renewal slips for those whose dues expired at the end of 2004. The returns have been very positive. We received 71 back including 21 Life memberships, 9 for 3 years, 12 for 2 years and 29 for 1 year.

Of the remaining "out there" we assume some will be "lost" in the desk work, those whose health and finances make joining a hardship, and some may have passed on, to be learned later-sometimes several years later.

We have also had 8 new members join the organization, 3 of which sent in their \$100 right off the bat to be come Life members and one was a re-instatement.

For your information, if yours dues is to be renewed at the end of this year, you need to get your check to us by the first of March 2006 or you would be dropped off the mailing list. That gives you almost three months (Dec, Jan and Feb) to sit down and pen out your check and send it in with the bottom of the dues notice.

OR....you could become a Life Member and never have to receive another dues notice again!!



Letters Received From Our New Members



Robert N. Beaty of Louisville KY (February 2005)

After release from active duty in 1960, I got into Secondary Education as a Science teacher. In 1970, I was promoted to High School Guidance Counselor where I remained until retirement in July 1, 1988.

After active duty in July 1963, I got into an active Air Force Reserve Unit flying C-119s, as navigator where we were called to active duty in May 1968, and remained on active duty for just one a year being released June 1968.

During this time we trained to fly the AC-119 gunship and I spent five months in Viet Nam flying gunship missions at night. The Reserve Unit and Wing 434th was located at Bakalar AFB, Columbus IN. After release from active duty, the Unit was transferred to Grissom AFB, Peru IN and changed to a fighter unit without navigators. This was in early 1970.

I transferred to a CAP Unit at Bowman Field, Louisville KY, remaining there until getting an assignment as navigator with the 302nd Wing (Buckeye Wing) 356 Sqdn. at Rickenbacker AFB, Columbus OH. In July 1973, I was flying C-123s as navigator. I was there until retiring Dec. 31, 1979. I am presently in Ft. Meade FL where we spend January-March. Hobbies are golf and gardening. I am married to Joyce and we have two daughters and two grandchildren.

Bobby M. Gwaltney of Woodstock GA (420 and 622)

I was stationed at England AFB at the inception of the 420th Air Refueling Squadron until it went to England (UK). Was transferred to the 622nd AREFS until my discharge in September 1955. I worked at Lockheed Martin Aircraft Corporation for 40 years, retiring July 31, 1996. Have been doing what I want to since.

Gene L. Holligan of Bryan TX (February 2005)

After my tour of duty in the Air Force, I went to work for the Meteorology Dept, Texas A&M University. We did weather data all over Texas and in Hanford, Washington. I attended Texas A&M in Electrical Engineering and worked for the Engineering Testing Lab, testing motors for independent companies.

Then I decided to try my hand at teaching at Central Texas College in Killeen, TX. This lasted about two years and I went into business for myself, which was very good, but in 1977, I had to retire because of my back.

I was a member of the Confederate Air Force for about fifteen years, which was very enjoyable and got to work with some of the people who flew FIFI, the only flying B-29.

Terry R. Larson of El Paso TX (February 2005)

After my enlistment in the 431st at Biggs AFB, El Paso TX, was over in 1964, I went to work for Texaco Refinery for 16 years, then retired after 20 years with the Ysleta Independent School District as Head Custodian.

I was contacted by an email from Sgt. Davis at Biggs Aviation Operations and invited to attend the 80th Anniversary of the naming of Biggs AFB/Biggs Army Airfield. At this function, I was also contacted by the Ft. Bliss Museum, asking for my help in setting up a section for Biggs AFB, as the only history that they had of the base ends in the early 50s.

ALERT: If any former Air Force members who were at Biggs after the 50's and have any pictures of Biggs and/or other items of interest from the 60s, let me know. I am interested in pictures of the barracks and other buildings, before they were torn down.

I know that there are many personnel who were at Biggs in the 431st while I was there (1961-64) whose names were not on the TAC Tankers membership list. If you were in the 431st, pass the word of this membership list which is available to them. Word of mouth works!! I can be contacted at tlarson1007@aol.com or 915-592-2195.

Anthony C. Pronier of Long Beach CA (January 2005)

I joined the 431st AREFS at Turner AFB, Albany GA in 1957 as a pilot and supply officer. I was project officer in our move to Biggs AFB, El Paso TX in 1959. During my stay at Biggs, I served in the capacity of Flight Commander, Budget & Supply, and the project officer for the squadrons deactivation in March 1965, then retiring in June of the same year.

I was privileged to be selected to fly the last KB-50-J #389 to its permanent home at the Air Force Museum, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH. I flew with Air America in southeast Asia (Viet Nam and Laos) for seven years until 1972. I then taught grades 9 through 12 with the Los Angeles Unified School district then finally hung it up in 1987.

Roy Thompson of Woodburn OR (January 2005)

Ever since Labor Day of 1962, when I signed into the 431st ARS at Biggs AFB, the KB-50 and the people that were associated with it have been a part of who I am. Even today, nearly 40 years later, there are several people that I am still proud to call close friends. To be accepted into this association would allow me a chance to renew some long lost friendships.

When I first discovered the TAC Tankers web site you can imagine how excited I was to see the pictures of that great air plane. And then to find that my picture, along with the rest of my air crew was there, what a day that was! I had to share it with everyone that I know. The other first term airmen that I served with were among the first to know.

To give you an idea of what that grand old plane has meant to me, in 1977, I ordered a new Ford pickup. Along with it I also ordered custom plates from the state of Oregon. KB-50 was on display all over the great North West for over 20 years.



Now with the invention of e-mail, I just had to do it again. Only one address would do for me: kb50j431@HOTMAIL.COM.

421st Wake Island Patch?

We received a really good letter from Al Snyder, explaining the origins of the famous 'Wake Island Patch.'

"I read the Tanker Tales and the picture of the Wake Island Patch. I was with the 421st at Yokota from 1962 until they broke up. Thus I spent a lot of time on Wake Island when they were bringing F-105s over. Here is the story of the patch as I know it.

In 1962 or 63 (63 I think), I was a navigator on Wes "Killer" Cain's crew. Our co-pilot was Herb Hazen. We hung out either at the PanAm Club or the SAR bar. The SAR people were a Navy outfit out of Kwajalein Island. The 2 main crew members involved were Don Player and Chet Nightingale, both Navy lieutenant commanders. All of the 421st crews and the Navy guys became very good buddies. I visited Kwaj a couple of times and took Chet and Don back to Tokyo with us at least once.

One night in the SAR bar, after drinking a couple "Big Orange" drinks, some one mentioned that we should have a patch to show we had served on Wake. One thing led to another and 2 patches came out of the group. One for the AF (printed below), the other for the Navy. That one was very similar except along the top it said "Tropical Island Transport Service" (TITS) and on the bottom it said Wake and Kwajalein Islands. Under the drawing of Wake it had (name of outfit) USN. I forgot what their name was.

Anyhow, Don Player took the drawings back to Kwaj to get 25 of each made. I saw the samples of them he had made, but never got one of either for myself. As you will recall about this time we got all the 105s to Yokota and the 100s to Clark and Vietnam so the 421st participation began to cut back. I was back on Wake for the last time in late 64 or early 65.

As a result of cut back of AF missions out of wake, I never knew whether the patches became a reality or not. I can't think of any 421st crews who might know either."



Enclosed were some pictures taken at Wake which were forwarded to me for the TAC Tankers Archives.

Air Medals in the 427th

I found an article on air refueling from the Airman Magazine (Feb 1963). In there, besides all the SAC stuff, was a description of the KB-50 units and operations, and among that was mention of two different Air Medal awards to our folks. Those of us who later flew in Southeast Asia remember that the Air Medal was mostly awarded for a certain number of combat or combat-support missions, but in the era before then it was a very difficult award to get. But in both these cases it was very much deserved.

The first case involved the 427th crew of Capt. Edward J. Petroski. Here's the citation for the award: Captain Edward J. Petroski distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight on 5 February 1962 west of Lajes Field, Terceira, Azores. On that date, as commander of a KB-50 tanker assigned the emergency refueling of a F-100 fighter, Captain Petroski displayed outstanding professional ability on the rendezvous, hookup and maintaining of his aircraft as a stable platform over an extended refueling track. The conduct of this mission in an emergency which could have resulted in loss of life and aircraft reflects credit on Captain Petroski and the United States Air Force.

"The Flyer" newspaper at Langley AFB expanded on this by noting that a flight of KB-50s had received a "May Day" call on an inbound F-100 piloted by Capt. Joe Carter of Cannon AFB, New Mexico. He was 250 miles out from Lajes and running out of fuel. Petroski and crew made contact about 150 miles out, began a descending turn, and at 13,000 feet made a partial hookup. Carter got 1000 lb of fuel, which enabled him to make a normal hookup, thus saving himself and his aircraft.

In a parade and ceremony at Langley on 13 October 1962, Petroski got his Air Medal. Just as important, really, the rest of his aircrew were awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal. They were 1st Lt. John D. Fox, copilot; 1st Lt. Allen L. Boquist, navigator; TSgt William C. Warner, flight engineer; and Airmen 2nd Class Gordon A. Deaver and Charles E. Earhart, both refueling operators. Personally, I believe they all should have gotten Air Medals as well, but the AF Commendation Medal was almost as hard to get back then. The second Air Medal mentioned in that 1963 article went to another 427th guy, but I do not yet have the information behind the deed. The article says:

TSgt Robert C. Deivert, a KB-50 scanner from Langley AFB, VA, who has been credited with the "save" of a F-104 for his rapid action. Sergeant Deivert's call for his pilot to dive when he noticed that the F-104 pilot had grown hypoxic and his expert manipulation of the drogue during the plane's rapid "toboggan" descent earned him the Air Medal.

Info I have notes that then SSgt Deivert was an instructor refueling operator in the 427th at least from 1956 through 1961, mostly on the George Ganjon crew. If anyone has more info on Bob Deivert and this incident, please contact me, and we'll round out his story in the next "Tanker Tales." I'll also happily take any more info about the Petroski incident.

These tales I know are not the only "saves" we all made in our day. Each unit has its own rescues like these two. As I go through the unit histories I will probably find others to report. But please send me your remembrances of such emergencies. After all, that is why we toiled those many hours at weird speeds and altitudes, to get those fighters safely to their destinations!

Bermuda Cruise Update

I have been in touch with Ginger Shriver of Warwick Travel in Newport News, VA regarding the progress of our Bermuda Cruise set for October 15-22, 2005 on the Horizon of the Celebrity Cruise Line. As of this writing we have 5 staterooms booked (Boyington, Jenkins, Raschke, Szanyi and Bud Wede). There were several others who indicated during the holiday card exchange that they were planning on going.

Remember that June 10 is the deadline for registration and August 1 is when the balance is due. There is a required deposit of \$250.

Celebrity Cruise Lines-The ship Horizon

Dates **October 15, 2005**-7days

Leaves **Philadelphia, PA** going to St. George, Hamilton and back to Philadelphia by Oct. 22.

Rooms blocked:

10 cabins in category 9-inside (\$816.75)

10 Cabins in category 4-outside (\$926.25)

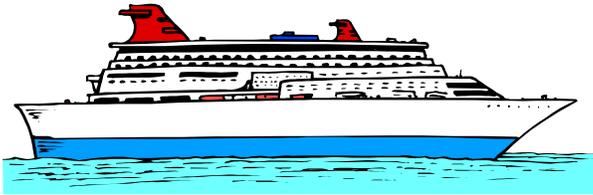
5 Cabins in category 8-outside-restricted view (\$ 826.75)

Fees already include the port charges of \$241.75. Figures shown are per person. In order to hold these cabins, Bo Ault, the TAC Tankers treasurer sent a refundable deposit of \$25 per room to Ginger.

Give Ginger a call at 757-599-3011 and select your cabin. They will expand the block if needed. This date (Oct. 15-22) had the very best rates we could find, trust me!

If you have an internet server, you may want to go to any of the travel websites (www.Travelocity.com, www.orbitz.com, etc) and log in **crui**ses-Celebrity Cruise Lines- and view the floor plans or Ginger may be able to send you a copy of the ship's floor plans. The AAA offices also carry booklets on each of the cruise lines (we have one).

Were YOU one of those many crew members who flew into Bermuda during those refueling days???. It might be fun to see how it looks now. If you know of any of your buddies in TAC Tankers who were there, get a group together. Memories are meant to be had!



Slow Dance

Have you ever watched kids
On a merry-ground?
Or listened to the rain
Slapping on the ground?

Ever followed a
butterfly's er-
ratic flight? Or
gazed at the sun into the
fading

night? You better slow
down. Don't dance
so fast. Time is short. The
music won't last.

Do you run through each
day On the Fly?
When you ask "How are
You?" Do you hear the re-
ply? When the day is
done Do you lie in your
bed With the next
hundred chores Running

through your head? You
better slow down.
Don't dance so fast. Time is
short. The music won't last.

Ever told your child,
We'll do it tomorrow?
And in your haste,
Not see his sorrow?

Ever lost touch,
Let a good friendship die
Cause you never had time
To call and say, "hi!"
You better slow down.
Don't dance so fast. Time is
short. The music won't last.

When you run so fast to get
somewhere, You miss half
the fun of getting there.
When you worry and hurry
through your day, It is like



BOOKS REVIEW

By Nate Hill

Last October Ted Clisby (427) was very gracious and asked me to ride with him in his Beech Debonair to the Aviation Cadet Reunion in Eureka Springs, AR. While doing what I do best, I talked to a former Cadet from class 53-F who was one of our customers and a very talented author whose name is Mark Berent.

Mark has written 5 books about Viet Nam from early '60s to finish, from south to north, air and ground, Army and Air Force, and everything in between. These books are combat fiction, but written with plenty of hands-on experience which I will discuss later. The books follow the three main characters for the entire time. Court Bannister starts as an Air Force captain flying F-100s out of Bien Hoa on close air support missions in the south, then he progresses through F-4s over Hanoi and ultimately into B-52s at the end of the war.

Toby Parker starts as a young 1st Lieutenant on classified courier duty riding in O-1s. His pilot is shot on one of the first missions and he learns very quickly to fly the Bird Dog from the back seat. Toby gets some high level recognition from that mission and goes back to the States for pilot training. Then back to VN to "do the business".

The third character is Wolf Lochert who is an Army Lt Colonel in Special Forces. Wolf is the epitome of a Green Beret who is always ready to go out in the weeds to "chase Charlie and his buddies". He was even involved in the Son Tay raid. Mark weaves a hair raising tale of these three guys and many others through the five books. I suggest you read them in order which is: 1) Rolling Thunder, 2) Steel Tiger, 3) Phantom Leader, 4) Eagle Station, and 5) Storm Flight.

Now about the author: Mark Berent served in the Air Force for 20 years retiring as a Lt Col. He has logged 4350 hours of flying time, over 1000 of them in combat during 3 tours in Viet Nam. He earned the Silver Star, 2 DFCs, over two dozen Air Medals and numerous other "fruit salad". As a captain he flew 265 missions in the F-100 in 1966 from Bien Hoa.

While off duty he flew with FACs in their O-1 aircraft to better understand the war. He also spent much time with the Special Forces in III Corps Mike Force including going on patrol with them in the Loc Ninh area. He flew over 200 missions in F-4Ds out of Ubon, Thailand first as a flight commander in the Night Owls Squadron and then as commander of the famous Wolf FACs. Both units flew over North Vietnam and all of Laos. Berent spent hundreds of hours over the Ho Chi Minh trail both as a night strike pilot and as a fast FAC controlling strikes against guns and trucks he found on the trail.

As a Lt Col he served from July '71 to August '73 as air attache in the US Embassy Phnom Penh, Cambodia. While there, besides flying hundreds of hours in the U-10 and C-47 gathering vital intelligence he also logged time with the Khmer (Cambodian) Air Force in their T-28, O-1, UH-1 and AC-47 aircraft.

After reading the books, if you would like to have more info on Mark let me know and I will be happy to put you in touch with him.

Update on the PIMA Project

Recently the TAC Tankers received a letter from Daniel J. Ryan, Executive Director of the Arizona Aerospace Foundation at the Pima Air and Space Museum. It began with "Do you have any uncommitted funds in your year-end giving budget?" It seems they are beginning a new expansion project called the Spirit of Freedom hanger. Support has come from the local voters.

We have tried to keep our members abreast of the situation with Pima in regards to our KB-50 which is housed at this complex.

On 19 February 2005, our organization responded with the following letter:

"Dear Mr. Ryan,

We of the TAC Tankers Association are in receipt of your undated letter soliciting monetary donations to the SPIRIT OF FREEDOM hanger matching grant program. As your records will show, our organization has donated several thousand dollars in recent years specifically for use in restoring the KB-50 aircraft in your display inventory.

We have from time to time inquired as to a timetable for restoring this particular aircraft. Responses have often been slow in coming. To our knowledge no definite plan has been developed to restore this aircraft much to our disappointment. The amount of money required for the work has increased from an initial estimate of \$5,000 in the year 2000 to more than \$12,000 in the latest estimate. It is our understanding that the only restoration accomplished to date is replacement of landing gear tires.

We bring this to your attention because of the impact it has on our membership with respect to further donations to the Pima Air and Space Museum. At our 2004 reunion, the membership voted to withhold any further donations until the restoration of the KB-50 was undertaken and a firm timetable established for completion of the work. In essence we want to know that the funds earmarked for this project which includes our donations are being utilized for that purpose and in a timely manner. At present we have no assurance of this.

TAC Tankers Association has over 600 active members, all of whom served in KB-50 units in various capacities. Our membership has always been very forth coming in donating money to worthwhile projects related to preserving the history of tactical air refueling. We consider the restoration of Pimas's KB-50 a high priority project. For this reason we will withhold any consideration of donating funds to the SPIRIT of FREEDOM project until we see tangible results on the KB-50 restoration

We trust you will be understanding of our position in this matter. We welcome your response at any time and would appreciate further word regarding the use of our previous monetary donations earmarked for the KB-50.

Sincerely,

Daniel R. Weber

Chairman, Board of Governors

TAC Tankers Association, Ltd.

The Truth About War By Ralph Peters

(This article was published in the New York Post on Feb. 6, 2005 and sent to us by T.O. Williams (429, 421))

In San Diego on Tuesday, I had the privilege of sitting beside Lt.Gen. Jim Mattis, a Marine who knows how to fight. We were on a panel discussing future war. And Gen Mattis, a Marine to the marrow of his bones, spoke honestly about the thrill of combat.

Mattis has commanded at every level. In Desert Storm, he led a battalion. In Afghanistan and then in Iraq, he led with inspiration and courage. Everyone on our panel had opinions about war, but that no-nonsense Marine knew more about it than the rest of us combined.

In the course of a blunt discussion of how our military has to prepare for future fights, the general spoke with a frankness that won the hearts of the uniformed members of the audience. Instead of trotting out politically correct cliché's, Mattis told the truth: "You go into Afghanistan, you got guys who slap women around for five years because they didn't wear a veil -it's a hell of a lot of fun to shoot them."

The language wasn't elegant. But we don't need prissy military leaders. We need generals who talk straight and shoot straight, men who inspire. And I guarantee you that any real Marine or soldier would follow Gen. Mattis.

What was the media's reaction? A B-team news crew saw a chance to grab a headline at the military's expense (surprise, surprise). Lifting the general's remarks out of context, the media hyenas played it as if they were shocked to learn that people die in war. Combat veterans are supposed to be tormented souls, you understand. Those who fight our wars are supposed to return home irreparably damaged.

Hollywood's ideal of a Marine is the retired colonel in the film "American Beauty," who turns out to be a repressed homosexual and a murderer. Veterans are supposed to writhe on their beds all night, covered in sweat, unable to escape their nightmares.

War does scar some men. Most vets, though, just get on with their lives – scratch a veteran looking for pity and more often than not you'll find a supply clerk who never got near a battlefield. And some who serve—the soldiers and Marines who win our wars—run to the sound of the guns, anxious to close with the enemy and kill him. They may not love war itself, but they find combat magnetic and exhilarating. They like to fight.

That's fine in movies featuring Brad Pitt as a mythical Greek hero. But God forbid that a modern-day Marine should admit that he loves his work.

Well, Marines and soldiers don't serve full careers because they hate their jobs. In peace or war, the military experience is incredibly rich and rewarding. And sometimes dangerous. Goes with the territory. But for most of the young infantrymen in Iraq, their combat experience will remain the highpoint of their lives. Nothing afterward will be as intense or exciting. And they will never make closer friends than they did in their rifle squad.

Gen. Mattis may have been unusual in his honesty, but he certainly isn't unusual in our history.

We picture Robert E. Lee as a saintly father figure, but Lee remarked that it's good that war is so terrible, since otherwise men would grow to love it too much. He was speaking of himself. Andy Jackson certainly loved a fight, and Stonewall Jackson never shied from one. Sherman and Grant only found themselves in war.

We lionize those who embraced war in the past, but condemn those who defend us in the present. George S. Patton was far blunter than Jim Mattis—but Patton lived in the days before the media was omnipresent and biased against our military. The hypocrisy is stunning. Gen. Mattis told the truth about a fundamental human activity—war— and was treated as though he had dropped a nuclear weapon on an orphanage. Yet when some bozo on a talk show confesses to an addiction or a perversion in front of millions of viewers, he's lionized as "courageous" for speaking out. Sorry. It's men like Jim Mattis who are courageous. The rest of us barely glimpse the meaning of the word.

Had Gen. Mattis collapsed in tears and begged for pity for the torments war inflicted on him, the media would have adored him. Instead, he spoke as Marines and soldiers do in the headquarters tent or the barracks, on the battle field or among comrades. And young journalists who never faced anything more dangerous than a drunken night in Tijuana tried to create a scandal.

Fortunately, Lt.Gen. Mattis has three big things going for him: The respect of those who serve; The Marine Corps, which won't abandon a valiant fighter to please self-righteous pundits whose only battle is with their waistlines; and the fact that we're at war. We need more men like Mattis, not fewer. The public needs to hear the truth about war, not just the crybaby nonsense of those who never deigned to serve our country.

In my own far humbler career, the leaders I admired were those who had the killer instinct. The soldiers knew who they were. We would have followed them anywhere. They weren't slick Pentagon staffers anxious to go to work for defense contractors. They were the men who lived and breathed the warrior's life.

Table manners don't win wars. Winning our nation's battles demands disciplined ferocity, raw physical courage—and integrity. Jim Mattis had those qualities in spades. Semper Fi, General!

Ralph Peters is a retired Army officer and the author of "[Beyond Baghdad: Postmodern War and Peace.](#)"

Bits and Obits

We recently learned of the passing of Robert P. Nix on 22 January 2005. Bob was a member of the 422, 429 and 4505 and is survived by his wife Jeanette (810 Ivy Court, Bellvue NE 68005).

A former member, Gene Rowland of the 421st passed away on 7 December 2004 according to a call from his wife, Jessie.

Bill Dekker of the 421st has been keeping us updated regarding his wife Eleanore and her medical situation. On January 21 she had triple bi-pass surgery in Concord CA and recovered nicely with rehab physical therapy. By mid February she was in and out of ICU with possible kidney complications. She was to be transferred to UC Davis in Sacramento as of Bill's memo the 15th. We send our prayers to the Dekker family and look forward to good news soon. If you recall Eleanore had problems in Colorado Springs with the altitude and missed several of the events.

Chaplain's Corner

By Rev. George Burrows

The past couple of months have been very pressing on me. I don't feel that there is anything seriously wrong with me. There just seems to be a number of little things that interrupt my daily thoughts, my nightly sleep, my prayers, and my studies.

I know it's all going to work out. It will work out because, "Jesus tells me so!"

Has anything like this ever happened to you? If so, have faith, "Pray your way through it. " And believe that God really knows all about it and will make it right—Remember: "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so!" I ask God to bless you all.

Shalom! Pastor George

Museum of Aviation Pioneer, Darwin Edwards, is Honored with Ceremony and Display at Robins AFB

In November 2003, the TAC Tanker Association lost one of its avid members and supporters. However, he was not forgotten as reflected in an article sent to us from Georgia. Here is the report of the tribute to Lt. Col. Darwin Edwards (429) on December 7, 2004., written by Gene Rector a [Macon Telegraph](#) Staff Writer.

"ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE—About 150 supporters and friends paid tribute to a Museum of Aviation pioneer Tuesday, a man most of them called "Mr. Museum."

The almost hour long ceremony concluded with the unveiling of an exhibit honoring Air force Lt. Col. Darwin Edwards as the museum's curator for 14 years until his November 2003 death.



Edwards oversaw the museum's growth from modest beginnings to today's display of more than 95 aircraft and thousands of artifacts. 'And Darwin probably had a story to tell about each one of them,' said Paul Hibbits, museum director.

The exhibit is located in the Eagle Building rotunda and features a commemorative bust, video kiosk and a

display case containing memorabilia from Edwards' service with the 20th Special Operations Squadron. The bust was commissioned and funded by Miami businessman Dudley Whitman.

Edwards, a Georgia native, spent more than 30 years in the Air Force before retiring as a lieutenant colonel and assuming the local curator position. He was highly decorated combat pilot, earning a Silver Star, two Distinguished Flying Crosses and a Purple Heart during the Vietnam War.

Retired Air Force Maj. Gen Cornelius Nugteren said Edwards was a perfect fit for the museum job. 'He never met an airplane he didn't like,' Nugteren said, 'and he spent 14 years doing what he loved. He's a real testimony to what one person can do. He had a keen insight into the romance, miracle and wonder of flight—that it's more than a science. It's an art.'

Nugteren was Warner Robins Air Logistics Center commander in the 1980s and his influence was critical in establishing what has become the nation's forth largest aviation museum. He said Edwards' passing leaves a huge void. 'It means we've got the stick,' he said. 'It's our airplane now.'

The ceremony was attended by several members of the Edwards family, including his widow, Sheila, and son, Richard. 'It means a lot to us that the museum would go to this extent to pay tribute to him.' Sheila Edwards said. 'He won't be forgotten.'

Hibbits talked about his relationship with Edwards, a relationship that blossomed during the two years they served on the museum staff.

'His heart and soul revolved around the museum and the people who work here,' Hibbits said. 'I never met with him without leaving with a smile on my face. Not a day goes by that I don't listen for his footsteps or expect to see him as I turn the corner'"