



Recon Recorder



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER Maurice Cea

We extend our thanks and appreciation to the 55th Strat Recon Wing for their excellent presentation of the 2003 Recon Rendezvous Symposium. Also special thanks to Jack Kovac's for the many hours he devoted to an outstanding program. It was great to get together with our friends and turn back the clock some 50 years. We were able to see and hear a great part of our Resonance history and hear some of the heroic stories of the past. We are ever so proud to have been a member.

Angelo DeFelice's "Big Roast" was again a big success. Everyone had a great time. We are very sorry for having a conflicting schedule.

Make sure to keep the dates in September 2004 that are planned for our reunion. Phil VanDuesen has been busy doing the footwork.

Thanks to Stan Kopala for keeping us informed of our finances. Also, Secretary, Jim Bard has been doing an excellent job keeping us informed in many areas including member's good and bad news. Many thanks to all the members who help to maintain the association.

We thank the Lord for helping us sustain our health and pray for the help and comfort of those in recovery.

We welcome our new members:

Leroy McKay Al Vettel
Bernard Mattei
Tony Massengill (Reinstatement)
Frank Lautner (Reinstatement)

VP COMMENTS Jerry Haines

Angie DeFelice hosted a pig roast for the 91SRWA at his Ohio hunting lodge 29 August 03. Good food, good stories, good laughs, good friendship and a good time...

Another in 2004?????
We'll get the word out if it's to happen.

91SRWA 2004 REUNION Phil Van Deusen

The 91SRWA reunion and membership business meeting will be held 16 - 20 September 2004 at the Radisson in New London Connecticut. All the information needed starts on page 7.

IMPORTANT: A registration form is included.

BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA
Reunions – Annual reunions will be discussed in Connecticut during the business meeting.

You are invited to submit other topics to the Secretary.

ADMINISTRATIVE "STUFF" Jim Bard - Secretary

When completing your dues renewal form be sure to insert the POC data of a person a few years younger than yourself (i.e., a son or daughter).

F.Y.I.

My grandson, T.J. Widick, began Air Force basic training 17 December.

91st Bomb Group – WWII

I have been in contact with our predecessor unit. (Some of their stories are included below.) We extended an invitation to the membership of the 91st Bomb Group Association to join us at our reunion. Their President, Ed Gates, sent us a holiday greeting.

91st Space Wing

Yes the 91st is alive and well at Minot. The Commander, Col. Mark Owen sent us a holiday greeting.

MEMORIES Jim Brennan - Archivist

I am always searching for photographs, documents, or even handwritten memoirs related to the 91SRW.

My home address, e-mail address, and phone number are on the roster.

RECON RENDEZVOUS 2003

The USAF Museum and the 55th SRWA co-hosted "Recon Rendezvous 2003." In conjunction, the 91SRWA and the Lockbourne AFB Reunion Group had a combined mini-reunion at the Hope Hotel.

Here's some feedback:

Just a note to say how much we enjoyed having the 91st SRWA join us at the Recon Rendezvous 2003 in Dayton. We hope you all had a terrific time seeing old friends and reliving those grand tales of how we won the Cold War. It was truly a terrific weekend, with the dedication of memorials by those Cold War Warriors whose dedication and love of country prevailed through those tough and dangerous years. I salute the 91st SRW for all they did to preserve our freedom and wish you all the best in the years to come. Sincerely,

William H. Ernst
President, 55th SRWA

FINANCES Stan Kopala - Treasurer

We are financially sound. Our latest financial statement is attached as page 5.

****IMPORTANT****

MEMBER DUES

Please note that your membership dues are mailed to me (Stan). **A renewal form for 2004-06 is on page 13. It is due prior to 30 June – why not do it today?**

While you are thinking about it, be sure to consider a Life Membership; we already have had some send it in. Who's next?

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER Don Harrison

If you or someone you know from the 91SRW is ill, or if you hear of a passing, please contact me ASAP.

My home address, e-mail address, and phone number are on the roster.

91SRWA IS ON THE INTERNET

Jim Brennan

The address is: 91stsrw.microway.com
I would like some feedback: What do you like or dislike about the current structure? What would you like to see there?

Send me an e-mail or letter, or call me some evening. I want to hear from you.

LOOKING FOR DONATIONS

Carl Dawalt

Do you have any old military items that they could donate to the USAF Museum? I just got back from Indiana and found an entrance ladder bungee cord that they may need for the RB-47 they reworked. It can also be used as a pattern to local manufacture if necessary. I have previously taken a B-47 seat cushion, old interphone headset and Mickey-mouse ear protectors out there. Just a thought.

The 91st SRS - From AF History:

November 9, 1950: A 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron gunner, Sgt. Harry J. Levene, scored the first B-29 jet victory of the Korean War, destroying an attacking MiG-15. The damaged RB-29 limped back to Japan, but five crewmen died in the crash landing.

February 6, 1951: The 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron performed its first night photographic mission.

April 1952: RB-29s from the 91st SRS flew reconnaissance of selected North Korean targets.

91st BGp - Firsthand history:

Hello, Jim. My name is Frank Farr. I was a navigator in the 323rd squadron of the 91st during WWII. I was shot down by a band of FW-190's near the Leuna refinery at Merseberg in Nov., 1944, and spent the last six months of the war as a guest of the Third Reich... It's nice of you to find time for us founding fathers of the 91st. I'd like to receive your newsletter at <Frank Farr, P.O. Box 839, Jamestown, NM, 87347>...thanks - **Frank Farr**

Hello Jim, My name is Philip G. Mack, former member of the 323rd Sq, 91st BG,

Sept. 43 -- March '44. Completed a combat tour of 26 missions in B-17F 42-29739, nicknamed "Village Flirt". (It was named before my crew received it.)

The airplane was retired when the "G" models became more abundant. I last saw it in Indianapolis, IN in 1946 where it was being operated by the CAA in connection with the development of a new instrument landing system now known as the "ILS."

I served as Co-Pilot for Capt. David A. Bramble who became Operations Officer of the 323rd near the end of his tour. I finished out the few remaining missions of my tour as PIC taking new crews on their first combat missions.

Of all the codes I've seen for logging Pilot time, I've never seen one for "Combat Flight Instructor."

I'm glad the name of the 91st lived on. I was told at some time that eventually the numerical designation was applied to the Missile program: the 91st Strategic Missile Wing."

What type aircraft did you guys fly?

Keep the blue up.

Phil Mack

Phil, In 1948-49 they were flying RB17's and RB29's; they also had RC54's and RB50's; in 1950-51 they went to RB45's. I came along in 1954 just as we were finishing the phase out of RB45's and being equipped with RB47E's and KC97's. At the time, I was a multi-engine jet aircraft mechanic assigned to the 323rd.

Our wing was deactivated Nov. 57.

In Nov. 62 the 91st Bomb Wing was reactivated and equipped with B52's and KC135's. It became the 91st Missile Wing in 68, and is now the 91st Space Wing.

Speaking of history - In April 2002 we mounted a plaque on the Wall of Honor at the AF Academy. Colonel Bradford E. Ward, Commander, 10th Air Base Wing, at the Academy, did the dedication. His father flew with you guys in the 91st BGp. **Jim**

Per **Mike Banta** - The 91stBGp flew a total of 340 combat missions with the loss of

197 B-17s Missing in Action; 646 airmen KIA; 147 MIA; and approximately 1150 POWs during our combat period at Bassingbourn. After the cessation of hostilities in Europe May 25, 1945, 91st airmen returned to Drew Field, Florida.

Mission # 183 to Berlin was my first, on 18 June 1944 and I finished my 35th with Mission # 250. **"AJ" Sinibaldo**

November 2, 1944, 59 years ago, was the most deadly day for the 91st Bomb Group in WWII. Of the 36 planes sent out that day 13 did not return. I lost a lot of good buddies that day. It is my hope that I am not the only one of the 91st who remembered.

Thanks for your concern and consideration. There seems to be so many people so concerned in depth for only today. They do not give a damn how we got here (by sweat and blood). **Marion C. Hoffman**

The 91st BGMA is having a reunion in Washington DC 30 Sep - 3 Oct 04.

Perhaps, you should consider joining us. Details are on the web page under Upcoming Events.

<http://www.91stbombgroup.com/>
Jim Shepherd, web master, 91st

Or contact:

Ed Gates, President 91st BGMA
13311 16th Ave Ct S
Tacoma WA 98444
Tel. 253-535-4246
gainmutual@yahoo.com

"THE DAY I VOLUNTEERED"

On a sunny day in late 1948 at McGuire AFB I was assigned by our Operations Officer, Capt. Lilly to fly as Radar Operator on F-13A (B-29) 577A for the day. I normally was assigned to Lady Doris II, tail # 986. This day's flight was short, around six hours as I recall. All went well until we turned final to land at McGuire and the landing gear lowered, well, almost;

the nose gear extended to about forty-five (45*) degrees and "jammed". The landing was aborted and the "gear recycled" to no avail with a "fly-by" the tower to further confirm our landing gear condition, NOT GOOD!

After a thorough discussion of the problem while orbiting the FIELD, the Pilot ask for a volunteer to attempt "kicking"

the nose gear down. The silence was DEAFENING to say the least. At the tender age of nineteen, having seen the consequences of a ("29") land with the gear up, I clicked my mike and said "Sir I'll do it!"

The Flight Engineer and Copilot seemed all too happy to help me get into my "chute" while the Pilot took her up to about 8,000 feet. At that point the nose well door was opened and I very confidently descended the ladder, which is attached in the wheel-well. Although the wind is "burbling" like mad around my flight suit I stand with one foot on the bottom rung of the ladder and reach, really a stretch for me, to the left side of the nose-well for the single hand hold, a phonolic handle, with my left hand and my right hand hanging onto the rung of the ladder. With my left foot I stomp-down on the dual wheel nose-gear and the wheels turn, almost causing me to lose my grip.

The Co-Pilot and Flight Engineer are watching from the rim of the nose-well door. I shouted up for the Pilot to brake the wheels, which he did. I tried again with the "stomping procedure" and after what seemed an eternity, the gear "broke loose" and dropped down with a positive indication. I calmly climbed back up with the Co-Pilot and Flight Engineer helping me in, whereupon I promptly fainted. I think they must have thought I died from fright, as they started slapping me on the back and shaking me. Needless to say I came around quickly and we landed with little or no fanfare.

The Pilot, which I will not name, was definitely not Mr. Personality at any time and true to his usual behavior, didn't say thanks for saving "the Bird" or our "Bacon", "go-to-hell" or any other expected comment. We all had another title for him however it's not appropriate for this! \$*&@?

Being on pretty good terms with Capt. Lilly, I never had to fly with that "turkey" again. In those days commendations were not handed out lightly; however I did receive other commendations on other special assignments. Although we had a few "bad apples", both commissioned and non-commissioned in the 16th Photo Recon Squadron most were very professional and a great bunch with which to be associated. It made you PROUD to be an AIRMAN in the BEST Squad-

ron in the BEST Wing (91st.) in the BEST AIR FORCE! To this day I am proud I could be a part of it and serve. **John D. Gilbert**, Radar Operator, Electronics Engineer-BSEE, Honor Guard, American Legion, Post #286, Pinecastle, FL.

P.S. I wonder who or what army, Roman, Hun, etc., came up with "Never volunteer for anything."

Another tale

The recent info on the 91st Bomb Group (RB29/45) reminds me of when I got to Lockbourne AFB in 1952 as an airplane radio repairman. Our shop was down by the control tower and there was a snack bar in the tower building and a 9 o'clock cup of coffee w/toast (10 cents) was the norm. Then it was the SRW and I worked on the 45's (eyeball on the nose) and 29's but I don't remember the latter being the RB model. Of course I was a radio fixer and not recon. Then came the RB 47, a new Armament/Electronics building at the other end of the flight line by which time I had cross-trained to the photo equipment repair field for the new RB 47. I believe some of the 91st planes were donated to form the 26th SRW (2 wing base now) then later I went with others out to Missouri to Whitman to transfer planes out there. There was a 90 day trip to Alaska where I got frostbite on my sitter and a 90 dayer to Ben Guire Morocco where I spent a lot of time working in my underwear at true hot weather test heat. Some of us got stuck there as some trouble arose with the Suez Canal. and we were about three weeks behind the others in returning to Ohio. Now- I transferred to England in Oct/Nov 57 (my Cmdr, LC Hardy told me this was my third relocation order and as he had gotten me out of Greenland & Morocco it was the best I had coming). What happened to the 91st SRW? Everything seems to indicate it was absorbed into smoke or renamed or what?

Frank Lautner.

(Frank's question has been answered. Ed.)

Obituaries

Doris Jean Skinner (Weber), age 65, died October 23, 2003 at Mt. Carmel Medical Center. Survived by husband, Bernard "Mike" Skinner Jr. She will be missed by all who knew her.

William (Bill) Welch passed away 6 Nov around 11 am. He and Martha were driving and he had an asthma attack. He went into cardiac arrest and was taken to North Hills Hospital. The doctors tried to revive him, but were unable to do so. A priest from St. John's Catholic Church was on hand and administered the last rites.

Note: Bill and his entire aircrew attended Recon Rendezvous 2003 and he was to join the association prior to the next reunion.

William (Bill) Ingles passed away December 13, 2003. Military services for Bill will be 3:00 PM, 21 January 2004 at Arlington National Cemetery.

MEMORABILIA

Art Schocken

Contact Ron Day for:

Polo Shirts - \$12 Hats - \$5

Sweat shirts \$20 (or less)

Contact Stan Kopala for:

Cups Pins Patches

Home addresses and phone numbers, and Ron's e-mail address, are on the roster.

91SRWA MAILING LIST

The updated list of association members, and some others that should be, is attached. The list includes "Spouse" and "E-mail." Send me updates and corrections to any and all of the data; my address is on the list. If you have e-mail, just send it to:

jimbardjr@adelphia.net

A REAL GOOD WAR

A Real Good War is a book written by a 91st Bomb Group navigator, Sam Halpert. I've got it, and I've read part of it. It's a great work about WWII.

If everything goes well, Sam has agreed to be our guest speaker at the Reunion.

To see a little bit about him go to:

<http://www.b17sam.com/>

RB-47E

Fact sheet and overflight story attached.

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MEMBERS' NOTES

Reminder for members attending the reunion – You must complete and mail the registration form and check to Phil VanDeusen. All the information you'll need will be in the package to be mailed within the next 60 days (I hope).

Members may submit short announcements and articles for inclusion in this section.

1. Why don't we start to tell Congress to knock off the income tax on Social Security? After all this was taxed money in the first place and was supposed to be a temporary situation back in the '80's. Dr. Conrad Chalick (91SRS)
2. For information on the Veterans' Party of Florida contact: Thom Mathey at (850) 636-3347 or tmathey@arinc.com. Links to other states through a national party web site can be found at www.veteransparty.us.

NOTICE TO NON-MEMBERS

You can join at any time by sending \$30 for two years dues to Stan Kopala. Give him your name, spouse's name, address, phone number, 91SRW affiliation, and e-mail address. Make your check payable to "91st Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association."

THE RECON RECORDER - Copyright [1 January 2004 by 91st SRW Association]

The "RECON RECORDER" is the official publication of the 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association. This newsletter is to keep our members informed about the organization, its activities, and pertinent related information. Original recipients for their individual use may reproduce the Recon Recorder entirely or in part.

As the association's Secretary, I solicit, accept and review items to publish. Send your input to: Jim Bard, 3424 Nottingham Road, Westminster, MD 21157-8304 or e-mail jimbardjr@adelphia.net

GOD BLESS AMERICA AND OUR WARRIORS IN HARM'S WAY.

A Christmas Story

T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS,
HE LIVED ALL ALONE,
IN A ONE BEDROOM HOUSE MADE OF
PLASTER AND STONE.

I HAD COME DOWN THE CHIMNEY
WITH PRESENTS TO GIVE,
AND TO SEE JUST WHO
IN THIS HOME DID LIVE.

I LOOKED ALL ABOUT,
A STRANGE SIGHT I DID SEE,
NO TINSEL, NO PRESENTS,
NOT EVEN A TREE.

NO STOCKING BY MANTLE,
JUST BOOTS FILLED WITH SAND,
ON THE WALL HUNG PICTURES
OF FAR DISTANT LANDS.

WITH MEDALS AND BADGES,
AWARDS OF ALL KINDS,
A SOBER THOUGHT
CAME THROUGH MY MIND.

FOR THIS HOUSE WAS DIFFERENT,
IT WAS DARK AND DREARY,
I FOUND THE HOME OF A SOLDIER,
ONCE I COULD SEE CLEARLY.

THE SOLDIER LAY SLEEPING,
SILENT, ALONE,
CURLED UP ON THE FLOOR
IN THIS ONE BEDROOM HOME.

THE FACE WAS SO GENTLE,
THE ROOM IN SUCH DISORDER,
NOT HOW I PICTURED
A UNITED STATES SOLDIER.

WAS THIS THE HERO
OF WHOM I'D JUST READ?
CURLED UP ON A PONCHO,
THE FLOOR FOR A BED?

I REALIZED THE FAMILIES
THAT I SAW THIS NIGHT,
OWED THEIR LIVES TO THESE SOLDIERS
WHO WERE WILLING TO FIGHT.

SOON ROUND THE WORLD,
THE CHILDREN WOULD PLAY,
AND GROWNUPS WOULD CELEBRATE
A BRIGHT CHRISTMAS DAY.

THEY ALL ENJOYED FREEDOM
EACH MONTH OF THE YEAR,
BECAUSE OF THE SOLDIERS,
LIKE THE ONE LYING HERE.

I COULDN'T HELP WONDER
HOW MANY LAY ALONE,
ON A COLD CHRISTMAS EVE
IN A LAND FAR FROM HOME.

THE VERY THOUGHT
BROUGHT A TEAR TO MY EYE,
I DROPPED TO MY KNEES
AND STARTED TO CRY.

THE SOLDIER AWAKENED
AND I HEARD A ROUGH VOICE,
"SANTA DON'T CRY,
THIS LIFE IS MY CHOICE;

I FIGHT FOR FREEDOM,
I DON'T ASK FOR MORE,
MY LIFE IS MY GOD,
MY COUNTRY, MY CORPS."

THE SOLDIER ROLLED OVER
AND DRIFTED TO SLEEP,
I COULDN'T CONTROL IT,
I CONTINUED TO WEEP.

I KEPT WATCH FOR HOURS,
SO SILENT AND STILL
AND WE BOTH SHIVERED
FROM THE COLD NIGHT'S CHILL.

I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE
ON THAT COLD, DARK, NIGHT,
THIS GUARDIAN OF HONOR
SO WILLING TO FIGHT.

THEN THE SOLDIER ROLLED OVER,
WITH A VOICE SOFT AND PURE,
WHISPERED, "CARRY ON SANTA,
IT'S CHRISTMAS DAY, ALL IS SECURE."

ONE LOOK AT MY WATCH,
AND I KNEW HE WAS RIGHT.
"MERRY CHRISTMAS MY FRIEND,
AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT."

This poem was written by a Marine stationed in Okinawa Japan a couple of years back.