



551st STRATEGIC MISSILE SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



Lincoln Missileer

NOV. 2004

Strength Maintains Security

Issue # 7

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551st SMS Association

The 551st Strategic Missile Squadron Association is a non-profit Veterans Organization. All donations to the organization are gratefully received, but are not deductible under IRS Code. The Executive Board is elected by majority vote of all members at each business meeting.



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I REMEMBER

By Don Luther

I'm amazed at all the things I remember about the 551st after 40 years. There were things that happened in the barracks, like the night someone brought a super-ball in and we were bouncing it off the walls in the hall and then having to clean the marks off the walls! I can't remember who's ball it was but I remember cleaning the walls, it took a couple of hours.

After one of those harsh snowstorms Otis Johnson and I were in his Jeep pickup and helped a trucker get his rig back on the road. Otis had a B-47 drag chute strap, which he hooked to the semi and pulled it back onto the road. He scared the tar out of me one night when he pulled off Interstate 80 at 70 mph right into a ditch, jumped out and relieved himself. I thought we were goners when he headed down that hill.

As much as I remember there are things that are foggy. Ever since we started this organization I've been trying to piece together a particular incident although a lot of it draws a blank. I was called out on standby to fill in on some crew. They were running a PLX that day; there was a stand board crew on site. I can't place the exact site or the crews. However, I do remember starting the standby generator from the engine control panel and blowing the top out of two Luberfiner filters! A water pump had been changed earlier. To do this the oil pressure relief valve had been removed. When it was reassembled the plunger was bent allowing the pressure to exceed operating limits. After cleaning up the oil spill I bypassed the damaged filters, and repaired the relief valve, we ran a successful PLX. I don't know who authorized the repairs. I don't think they were ever repaired? Does anyone remember this?

Everyone remembers being snowed in at the sites. I think there were two incidents in 1965. Our crew was at site 5 and we spent 67 hours on site, this was the first big snow that year. What crew did we relieve? Who relieved us, crew R-41? I've spent hours laying awake at night trying to remember this and other such irreplaceable times like this.

I'm sure I'm not the only one with questions like this. The earth won't stop rotating if I never find out, but it sure bugs me that I have these memory lapses. My wife, Jeanne, calls them "senior moments". I call it "CRS". Whatever each of us can remember about the life and times in the 551st should be preserved before all our good and bad memories are forever lost.

COVER PHOTO PROVIDED BY:

National Museum of the United States Air Force

MEMORIES — A VIEW OF LINCOLN AFB - WINTER OF 1965

(Photos courtesy of Mike Gingrich from the collection of Robert Loffredo of the 307th Bomb Wing Association.)



Snow, snow, & more snow. Now that was Lincoln! "Wait three hours; the weather will change!" is what we were always told. Crews were on duty anywhere from 3 or 4 days straight through, then returning to the base for a day or two off, and getting snowed in a *second* time for another few more days on their next trip out to the sites.

President's Corner:**“WHY” CANNOT ALWAYS BE ANSWERED**

I recently looked for the proper meaning of the word 'why' in the dictionary and it was noted as follows:
For what purpose, reason, or cause; with what intention, justification, or motive.

The word "Why" is used so often today that it seems that some people fail to have respect for their elders or superiors. When given a task at work, supervisors are often questioned. I must admit that I have used that word too many times as well. About two years ago when the new Air Force emblem was changed, many questioned 'Why'? Last month the name of the Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson Air Force Base was also changed! Again, "Why", was heard? Now it is known as the **National Museum of the United States Air Force**. This month we learned that the Air Force has changed another part of its history. It was announced that the "pocket rocket" was no longer an accepted uniform badge. Once again, "Why" was the resounding question pondered by many former Missileers. You can read the article on Page # 6 of this newsletter hoping that it may shed some light on that recurring question.

In our last issue of the *Lincoln Missileer* there was a story concerning the **Tomb of the Unknown** and the soldiers who guard this national monument. The story appeared different than some of the articles that have been floating around on the Internet these past few years, as well as from articles that you might have read in other publications. (Here comes that word again) *Why?* After reading some of the Internet stories I was impressed by some of the information that was contained within the articles. The story was prepped for our newsletter, however, members of our Editorial Staff questioned it. "I'd hate to tell you how many times I received these stories via the Internet," I informed the staff. Thankfully, our volunteers are very informed members. Several days of research uncovered the inconsistencies of the story and it was revised, ultimately, resulting in our final unadulterated article. So be wary of what you read on the Internet regardless of how good it sounds!

During our last business meeting in Lincoln someone asked us "Why" don't we, the Executive Board, look into expense reimbursements. Well, our mutually heartfelt response was that we sincerely enjoy what we are doing and our "pay" is seeing the smiling faces of all the members and their loved ones at the Lincoln Homecoming and future reunions. The people who volunteer for either the reunion committee or in helping with the newsletter are motivated volunteers who have, by way of their well-seasoned and experienced backgrounds, the expertise not only in exercising extreme resourcefulness, but also being important contributors and supporters to our organization. But what we really need is to have *you*, as former 551st members, join and financially support the organization with a donation. **Twenty-five dollars for two years will keep the Lincoln Missileer alive and keep it arriving at your doorstep three times a year. However, if you cannot, we still need you.... Take a moment to send in your application.**

We seek volunteers to help us. If you have an expertise or an individual strength that you think can be used by this association, please let us know. Our website has been updated and there is more to come shortly. In addition, do not forget the Lincoln AFB website. Robert Branting has created a separate website for the 551st. Websites are also maintained by the 98th and 307th **Bomb Wings** besides the **Association of Air Force Missileers**. (See list on Page # 6)

I regret to inform you that three of our members who attended the *Lincoln Homecoming* have "**Completed Their Last Countdown.**" In a previous issue we announced the passing of **Jim Trotter**. We have learned of the passing of **David Verbitsky** of CA. and most recently, of **Wells Hunt** of MA. David worked in the maintenance section of the squadron and was involved with the wine industry in CA. Up to his death **Wells Hunt**, a former deputy crew commander, kept in touch with Ron Resh after the reunion about the 551st SMS Association. Right up to the days before his death he showed his continuous support and concern. At the end of the reunion, Wells approached me and said "I was not going to come to this event since I did not enjoy either my high school or college reunions. I really enjoyed this and will be attending the next one." Wells had offered to volunteer to edit and publish the *Lincoln Missileer*, but after the reunion he underwent a medical procedure and was forced to withdraw his offer.

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(con't from Page # 4)

Additionally, we have also learned of the passing of Sidney Sanders. Sgt. Sanders was assigned to the Lox Clean Section. Sidney retired as a CSMSgt. and was residing in South Carolina. **Rest in peace my brothers.**

If I have learned only one thing since 1999 when I started searching for former members of the 551st SMS it's the importance of brotherhood. No matter what rank you were, we are all brothers! No matter what unit you were in, we are still all brothers. I saw this played out at two recent events that I attended, the **Association of Air Force Missileers** meeting and the **98th Bomb Wing Reunion**. The 551st had enough members present to have our own table during the **AAFM** banquet dinner in Omaha. No matter where you went and whom you were with, everyone was treated equally.

I would like to talk about the **98th Bomb Wing Veteran's Association**. Their reunion was held in the Washington D.C. area this past September. I had the opportunity to visit the new World War II monument that is adjacent to both the Korean and Viet Nam memorials. If you are in the area, please take the time to see these three memories to our fallen brothers and all those persons who had served during these time periods. During the Business Meeting part of the 98th reunion they elected a new association president. Lee Taube, who happens to work in the Space program, will serve as president until their next reunion in 2005. He has asked me to relay to all members of the 551st that they are more than welcomed to join the 98th since the 551st was part of the 98th from 1 Jan 64 to 25 June 65 when the squadron closed its doors. From what I know, Lee has been very helpful in welcoming us into their organization in the past. I was surprised when I returned home to find a letter from him indicating that as president of our association, I have been appointed to the **98th Board of Advisors**. The 98th's group covers their entire time period, from the B-24 days during World War II to the current **98th Range Wing** that is located at Nellis AFB, outside of Las Vegas. Anyone requesting information about any of these outstanding associations, **AAFM**, the 98th, or even the **307th Bomb Wing**, please contact either Ron Resh or myself. As we are going to press with this newsletter, we have learned that there is a movement spear-headed from the retiree's office at **Barksdale AFB** to restart a **SAC organization**. We can also provide your with this information too.

I would like to tell you that we have located another lost brother after a 2 ½ year search. I made a promise to one of our members that I would not give up the search for Donald Crawford. Do you have any idea how many Donald Crawford's there are in the USA? Some states alone have way over 100. With only one more additional piece of information I was able to locate the former Deputy Crew Commander and put him in contact with one of our brothers. The phone call hooking these two guys up for the first time was well worth it after all these years. You see I went TDY with Don Crawford and Cliff Walker. I never worked on a crew with either of these men, but it was an interesting experience. It was one additional piece of information that Cliff was able to provide me with that enabled me to locate Don. Guys, that call was great! Thanks.

Russ Harrison reports that his son, Christopher is a proud member of the 551st. That is the **551st Signal Battalion of the U. S. Army at Fort Gordon, GA**. His platoon is known as the "skull crushers." Now that sounds like a group of soldiers I would not want to mess with.

Before ending this issue's column I would like to welcome back as part of our editorial staff Laly Rivera. Laly works for the New York City Fire Department and has helped us with producing previous editions of our *Lincoln Missileer*.

The pre-registration survey was very helpful to the Reunion Committee and indicates that we will once again have a record turnout. I am hoping to see you all in Ohio in April of 05, if not, *Why not?*

Happy Holidays to all.

Ken

POCKET ROCKET REPLACED TO HELP UNITE SPACE PROFESSIONALS

"The new badge replaces the current space and missile functional badge worn by space and missile operations professionals", said Gen. Lance W. Lord, AFSPC commander. It is part of the AFSPC's senior leaders' continuing vision to unite the command's missions and specialties.

It also replaces the missile operations occupational badge, more commonly known as "the pocket rocket," currently worn by those in the missile operations career fields.



The New Master Level Space Badge

The 2001 U.S. Space Commission Report, assessing U.S. National Security Space Management and Organization, flagged the Department of Defense's need to further train and develop its space professionals. The report set the stage for an increased emphasis on training the nation's next generation of space professionals. Command officials also identified the need to capture the individual talents of the DOD space community.

"Just as pilots wear the same badge, whether they fly fighters, bombers, tankers or transports, all very distinct

and different missions, our space professionals should wear the same badge to reflect the unity of their mission and capabilities," General Lord said.

Officials said they anticipate another six to nine months before the badge is on the shelf. The badge still needs to be processed through the Air Force uniform board, Institute of Heraldry and thus, be mass-produced by the manufacturers.

No date has been set for mandatory wear.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL REUNIONS AND WEBSITES

551st SMS Association — April 20 — 23, 2005. Holiday Inn Fairborn, Ohio (937-426-7800)
<http://members.tripod.com/sms551association/id2.htm>

98th Bomb Wing Veteran Association — Sept. 11—16, 2005. Las Vegas, NV.
<http://www.pyramidiars.com/>

307th Bomb Wing Association — April 2 – April 6, 2006. Charleston, S.C.
<http://www.307bwassoc.org/>

Strategic Air Command — May 24—27, 2006. Tucson, AZ.
 E-mail: RAO@barksdale.af.mil Toll Free # 1-866-544-2412

SAC — <http://www.strategic-air-command.com>

Association of Air Force Missileer's—Sept. 27 — Oct. 1, 2006. Cheyenne, WY. Little America Hotel and Resort
<http://afmissileers.org/>

Lincoln AFB — <http://www.geocities.com/bigrob685/>
http://formerbases.com/neb_lincoln.htm

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE -TIME TO REMEMBER AND SHARE

In looking over the itinerary for our 551st reunion in Dayton next spring, several activities require further explanation: Friday afternoon, April 22, and Saturday morning, April 23, list two time-frames described as "Historical Review." Essentially, these are opportunities for informal discussions, presentations and reminiscences among 551st members and their families to recall and share anecdotes about your service with the 551st as well as life at LAFB and the City of Lincoln from 1961 to 1965.

At our first reunion in Lincoln last year, it became apparent that many people had numerous things they wanted to show, tell and share about their experience with the 551st. Time and scheduling simply did not allow that to be done to the extent we would have liked at that point. We resolved to remedy this at our next reunion.

Although attendance and participation in the historical review portions of our Dayton reunion are purely voluntary, we hope as many people as possible will take advantage of this opportunity to highlight and preserve the legacy of the 551st. In this regard, we are engaged in discussions with the Office of the Secretary of Defense in Washington, DC about the possibility of having a top historian from that Office attend our reunion. This would allow interaction with our members and firsthand knowledge and understanding of the critical role we played in winning the Cold War. We have already provided the Secretary's Office with volumes of material about the 551st and LAFB. They are very interested in learning more about our particular involvement, function, and the operations at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

In order to make our historical review as interesting and meaningful as possible, we invite suggestions and comments from our members. Several people have already provided us with materials and information to use. Others have made suggestions such as reenacting a countdown or a stand-board inspection for the benefit of our families and friends who might not be familiar with missile operations. Other people have indicated they will be bringing photos, films, maps, diagrams, and other visual presentations. Keep in mind that not all information needs to be visual. There will be plenty of opportunity for oral presentations and comments.

To add to your enjoyment, we want to keep the historical review segments of our reunion as informal and spontaneous as possible. We anticipate that people will be dropping in and out, and coming and going, as schedules and interests permit. Ken Fisher and his staff will be providing general oversight and coordination of this activity. In this regard, it would be most helpful if you would let Ken know in advance if you have any special requirements or needs, such as projectors, tables, easels, etc. in order to facilitate your participation.

Finally, many of our members are proud of the fact that they still have all or parts of their old Air Force uniforms. Whether or not they're from the 551st era, bring them along to Dayton. Let's do a real Show and Tell. *(Sure, we know they have a tendency to shrink over time, but work something out. Fake it. Get them tailored. Do whatever it takes. Let's have some fun.)*



Hey Guys,

This holiday season please don't forget to join and support the 551st SMS Association.

Don't be a turkey like me!

I'm Lucky, last year I got a Presidential Pardon so I will not be on the reunion menu in Dayton!

There are plenty of reasons for you to join your fellow missileers for the Dayton Rendezvous in April of 2005

By: Green County CVB

In April of 2005, the 551st Missileers will hold their annual reunion near Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and the National Museum of the United States Air Force. This has always been an exciting place to visit but for missileers, it's now more exciting than ever with the recently opened missile and Cold War galleries. The story of the role of outfits like the 551st in winning the Cold War is finally being told. You'll want to be there for the dedication of a permanent memorial to the 551st Strategic Missile Squadron at the Air Force Museum.

And there's a lot more to do that's within ten minutes of Command Central at the Holiday Inn Fairborn. You can take a walk on the 80-acre Huffman Prairie where the Wright Brothers created the world's first practical airplane in 1904 and 1905 after proving powered flight was possible in 1903. Because this prairie was absorbed into Wright-Patterson, it is still exactly as it was one hundred years ago. Stand on the very ground where Orville and Wilbur stood and over which they flew. Then go over to Wright Hill just a mile or so away and visit the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park. Here, at the Huffman Prairie Interpretive Center, you can hear the story of the Wright Brothers work at Huffman Prairie as well as the history of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Nobody tells a story better than the National Park Service.

If you're looking for a nice place to get in your daily walk, you can stay indoors at the beautiful Mall at Fairfield Commons or go outdoors on a mile of boardwalk that meanders through Siebenthaler Fen (part of a protected wetland) to an observation tower. Both of these are only a short drive from the hotel. Or take to the over 60 miles of paved hiking and biking trails that are almost at your hotels front door. Fifteen minutes away is historic Clifton where you can see the 1802 Clifton Mill as well as hike the handicapped accessible Clifton Gorge Nature Preserve.

The shopping is top notch. Fairfield Commons is one of the largest malls in Ohio. Beautiful marble floors, compelling sculptures, skylights, and five major anchors including Parisian and Lazarus make shopping here an unforgettable experience. The largest cigar store in Ohio is next door. The largest clock shop in Ohio is nearby as is a jam packed puzzle store. Rediscover the nostalgia of downtown shopping in Fairborn: fine jewelry, a lunch counter, family dining, expert advice on musical instruments, photography, and interior design, books, antiques, collectibles, gifts, art supplies, and one of the most unique stores in Ohio. Foy's Five and Dime (established in 1929) still sells the candy and toys of yesteryear. It also has the largest selection of Halloween costumes and merchandise in the Midwest. And just fifteen minutes away is the Village of Yellow Springs. Colorful window-boxed store fronts invite you to browse in one-of-a-kind shops featuring gifts of all kinds...from poetry and pottery to sandals and stained glass...from herbs and health foods to books and bicycles. Over 50 diverse and eclectic shops. Artisans of various disciplines are available to discuss their work and individual creations. Prime Outlets at Jeffersonville, Ohio's largest outlet shopping mall, is less than an hour away.

If any or all of this sounds great and you want to know more, give the Greene County Convention and Visitors Bureau a call at (800) 733-9109 or visit greenecountyohio.org. They'll be happy to talk to you and send you a free Visitors Guide.



Dave Verbitsky

FINAL COUNDOWN COMPLETED

Henry Arnold, Major, Crew # 11
 Carl Hansen, TSgt, Crew # 33
 Wells Hunt, Jr., Lieut., Crew # 31
 Sidney Sanders, TSgt., Lox Clean
 David Verbitsky, A2C, Msl. Maint.
 Ronald Welsher, A1C.



Wells Hunt

"Lord, Grant them everlasting peace" Amen

Welcome to the Dayton / Fairborn Holiday

By: Holiday Inn

We are thrilled to have the opportunity to host the 551st Strategic Missile Squadron Reunion April 20-23, 2005. We anticipate a successful turnout and look forward to making a memorable reunion for everyone.

You'll find that our convenient location will make the most of your valuable leisure and business time. We are located adjacent to Wright State University and the Ervin J. Nutter Center, and just minutes from the National Museum of the United States Air Force and IMAX Theatre, the Mall at Fairfield Commons and The Beavercreek Golf Club.

After a busy day, retreat to your spacious guest room surrounded with a full range of services and amenities as well as elegant extras.

- Attractive and Relaxing Décor
- Individual Climate Controls
- Indoor Pool & Fitness Center
- Electronic Keycard Security Locks

- Complimentary High Speed Internet Access
- Color TV with CNN, ESPN, STARZ!, HBO and pay per view movies
- In-Room Coffee Maker
- 1st Floor Hospitality Suite

Our hotel offers plenty of complimentary parking – including spaces for Coaches, RV's, and numerous Handicapped Accessible spaces.

We understand how important your reunion is and we look forward to welcoming the 551st Strategic Missile Squadron to the Holiday Inn Dayton/Fairborn – The exceptionally friendly staff and outstanding service will amaze you!

Should you require any special requests to make your stay more pleasurable, please do not hesitate to call me, Mrs. Kris Davis, Sales Account Manager, at 937-431-4603.

LATE BREAKING NEWS

Just as we were ready to go to press with this newsletter, we were officially informed of two important milestones in the history of the 551st Strategic Missile Squadron. The significance of these developments is something to be shared with pride by members, families and friends of the 551st.

On Tuesday, November 2, the memorial to the 551st Strategic Missile Squadron was completed and permanently placed at the National Museum of the United States Air Force (formerly the USAF Museum) in Dayton, Ohio. The formal dedication of this memorial will be held at 2PM, Thursday, April 21, 2005, during our Association's reunion in Dayton. For a picture and details about the memorial, please refer to page 3 of the July 2004 edition (number 6) of the *Lincoln Missileer*.

Everyone involved with the 551st to whom we spoke is excited about personally viewing the memorial. They look forward to the photo opportunities this presents for lasting remembrances with families and friends. As one proud 551st member put it, "Now I have something to show my grandchildren when I talk to them about my service with the 551st."

A few hours after we were advised of the placement of our memorial at Dayton, we received another bit of important news from Washington, DC. The Office of the Secretary of Defense notified us that the volumes of material we provided them this past year about the history and legacy of the 551st have been made a permanent part of the archives of the Department of Defense. Historians in the Secretary's Office inform us they are thrilled to have access to the first hand accounts and up close and personal experiences of our 551st members. They consider this material to be some of the most defining historical information they have seen about the Cold War Era.

These important accomplishments would not have been possible without the input, encouragement and support of you, the 551st members, families and friends. You furnished the grassroots historical information that we presented to the Secretary of Defense. You overwhelmingly expressed your desire for a permanent memorial to the 551st. This will be to-date the finest opportunity for us to show our pride, and to honor those as we reminisce, who serviced with us as a members of the 551st Strategic Missile Squadron.