



The Stratojet Newsletter

April 2006 Volume 24

For Those Who Designed, Built, Flew, Maintained and Loved the B-47



A vintage greeting from the site of the 2006 B-47 Stratojet Association Reunion. The city has changed some, the ramp is no longer covered with new B-47s, and the name on the factory has changed, but you can still navigate the territory with few problems. A full slate of activities is planned with ample opportunities for meeting old friends and making new ones. Details can be found on page 9 and the Association web site. Register and make your reservation today.

From The President's Desk

As I write this, the New Year is upon us. As is usually the case with such holidays one can't help but reflect upon all the events that brought us to this point in our lives. As we grow older – yeh, it's bound to happen – it's particularly fun to reflect upon those times in our lives when we feel we made a difference.

I'm sure that for most of you, as they are for me, those B-47 days in SAC will always be a highlight to remember. We were young, we were doing one of the most meaningful jobs possible – keeping the peace – and we were doing it together with some of the finest people anyone could ever want to associate with. When you think about it, we were richly blessed for having had that opportunity.

That, of course, is what the B-47 Stratojet Association is about – remembering and celebrating those days so that younger generations will appreciate what was done for them that they might continue to

live in freedom. As a younger generation holds the flag high in Iraq and Afghanistan, we can feel proud that we went before and paved the way. And we can know that they serve in the same tradition we did, to keep the peace and insure freedom throughout the world.

With this in mind, 2006 is a big year for the association with our reunion planned for 21 – 23 September in Wichita where most of the airplanes were built and where so many of us were introduced to the Stratojet. By now you should have received your registration materials and I hope you've already signed up. As always, we have some great events planned – our on scene committee headed up by Andy Laboski has done a terrific job of preparing the event – but as always, the main event will be the opportunity to sit down with old friends and reminisce about those halcyon days of yore. I look forward to seeing you there.

Don Cassidy

B-47 Stratojet Association Officers

President - Don Cassidy
1402 West Downer, Aurora, IL 60506
630-859-1922
colcass@sbcglobal.net

Vice-President - Sigmund Alexander
12110 Los Cerdos Dr., San Antonio, TX 78233
210-653-5361
sigmundalexander@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer - Bob Griffiths
303 Double Eagle Road, Burgaw, NC 28425-8559
910-300-3015
bobnsara@ec.rr.com

Membership Chairman - Dick Purdum
13310 South 26th Ave., Bellevue, NE 68123
402-291-5247
DickPurdum@cox.net

BX Officer - George Brierly
5342 6th Place South, Gulfport, FL 33707
727-321-1606
b47assn@together.net

Editor - Mike Habermehl
P. O. Box 1144, Brenham, TX 77834-1144
979-836-9427
mikeh@brenhamisd.net

Board of Governors

James Diamond
898 NE Coronado St., Lee's Summit, MO 64086-5529
816-524-9562
imjack@swbell.net

Wen Painter
P. O. Box 719, Mojave, CA 93502
661-824-2907
wpainter@antelecom.net

Andy Labosky
707 Briarwood Rd., Derby, KS 67037-2114
316-788-5277
labov47@msn.com

David Hitchcock
2016 Joann, Wichita, KS 67203
316-942-6607
slaplunenut@cox.net

Ken Tullin
2742 Perryville
Odessa, TX 79761
402-362-1797
ktullin@juno.com

Association Website - <http://www.b-47.com>

HELP WANTED!!!

Everyone who ever served on active duty knows that you *never volunteer for anything*. I'm asking you to forget that rule because your services are needed NOW.

New (and young) blood is needed for the board of governors of the association. There are just two qualifications to serve: (1) Willingness and (2) A strong desire to preserve the memory of the great B-47. The time required is small, since the board only meets once between reunions and the majority of business is conducted via email and phone.

Speaking as one who has been involved for several years now, I can tell you the rewards are great as you help young people appreciate the airplane that won the Cold War and you help some of us old timers remember the joys of our youth.

Please, won't you agree to serve? Contact me, Don Cassidy, 630-859-1922, 1402 West Downer, Aurora IL 60506. colcass@sbcglobal.net and let's discuss it.

Important Reminders

- **Pay your dues for 2006** (the number on your mailing label indicates the year through which you are paid-up).
- Send dues to Bob Griffiths, Treasurer.
- Send address, email, & telephone corrections to Bob Griffiths.
- Send newsletter articles, photos, news about members, etc. to Mike Habermehl, Editor.
- Invite a friend to join the Association.
- Mark your calendar for **21-23 September 2006** - Next Reunion in Wichita, KS.
- Register for the Reunion (see page 9)
- Make hotel reservations for the Reunion at the Wichita Marriott at 316-651-0333.

Board Approves Gift to Strategic Air and Space Museum

The Association's board recently approved a \$10,000 contribution to the Strategic Air and Space Museum's B-47 Restoration Fund. The SASM (formerly the SAC Museum) has the only bomber version of the B-47 maintained under cover free from the ravages of the weather. The association has made a previous \$5000 gift to the fund and is encouraging members to purchase inscribed bricks at \$500 each. Of that \$500 price, \$400 goes directly to the B-47 restoration fund. (See the previous newsletter for details of this opportunity to create a personal memorial at the SASM.)

The museum has assured us that this generous contribution will move the B-47 up to next in line awaiting restoration. The board felt that we wanted to get this project moving while our members are still young enough to visit and enjoy it.

For further details on gifts to the B-47 Restoration Fund, contact past president and present Membership Chairman Dick Purdum (see contact information on page 2).



Roll Call of Honor

William A. Rhymer passed away on 1 October 2005.

John Dunleavy passed away October 2005.

Don R. Hampton (Lt. Col. USAF, Retired) passed away 25 October 2005. He served as Electronic Countermeasures Officer as well as pilot on B-47s during the late 1950s.

Mayday

I am hoping someone would know about my father. He flew the B-47. I don't have much to go by. I was born in Mountain Home AFB (on the base). We moved to England sometime in the early 1960's, then back to the States, Lincoln AFB. He worked on the "Cloud Gap" project. From here I have not much more.

I don't know if he made full Bird or not, I was told no. He was Tri-Rated (?) and may have flown some tankers and B-52's.

Lt. Col. Robert Erwin Wolf

Born (?) 1932-36

Bases; Mountain Home, Lincoln, Feltwell RAF/AFB (England), some bases in Texas.

Thank you for any help.

Robert Erwin Wolf Jr.

Bob's email address is: robertewolf@hotmail.com

The B-47E at the Strategic Air and Space Museum is 52-1412, retired from the 301st BW in 1964. It formerly served with the 301st (55-58), 97th BW (58-59), 384th BW (59-61), the 70th BW (61-62) and back to the 301st in 1962. The airplane set outdoors for many years (64-98), and the weather took its toll on the airframe. Much corrosion is evident on the wings and fuselage, but thankfully it is now indoors (one of only two B-47s under cover; the other being the RB-47H at the National Museum of the USAF.

Photo: Mike Habermehl

Memories of Brize Norton

By Carl Midkiff

The following article was sent to our President-elect Sig-mund Alexander in a couple of letters prompted by Alex's Pictorial History of Brize Norton. The letters have been combined and edited just a bit, preserving as closely as possible this delightful slice of "Reflex life."

From 1958 to 1966 I spent about 60 days a year on Reflex duty as a B-47 crew chief and flight line controller in the Brize alert area. The 380th Bomb Wing (Plattsburgh AFB) usually kept nine B-47s at Brize, rotating three per week.

On the back page of the latest newsletter (Nov. 2005) is a photo of 53-2385 sitting outside the gate at Plattsburgh. When we put 2385 there, above the door was stenciled "Crew Chief, SSgt. Navaroth." When I first meet Navaroth he was an A1C assigned (PCS) as an assistant crew chief in the alert area at Brize.

I sure remember you guys (100th BW) being weathered out of Pease and landing at Plattsburgh. Nothing beats going to work looking forward to working on my B-47 and being told, "Sgt. Midkiff, you have a Pease bird to launch and they have ten write-ups to clear before take-off." I can laugh about it now but it wasn't funny then. Remember the sign in job control (debriefing) that said "Pease is our Profession?"

Most everywhere in the military, crew change is in the morning. At Brize we had ground crew change at 1400. This allowed the oncoming crew to get well before coming on duty. In the alert area we each kept a duffel bag of field gear in a storage area. When we came on duty we were required to have an AWOL bag with enough clothes, shaving gear, etc., to last three days. If we launched the alert forces we were to take the duffel bags, AWOL bags, and ourselves across the base, board a KC-97 and be transported to a base to recover B-52 first strike aircraft. We never knew where that base was.

The first time I went to Brize in 1959 (I think), I performed normal duties as crew chief of 53-1898. Normal duty hours were 24 on and 48 off. The next time I went (the next year) we three crew chiefs went over on our B-47 (which was normal), I was on the third B-47 and

we had some maintenance problems which required that I stay with my aircraft while the other two crew chiefs went on into the Reflex maintenance office. They were told that one of the three incoming crew chiefs would be assigned as flight line controller. By the time I came into the office they had convinced MSgt. Carl Glass (Reflex PCS NCOIC) that I should be the controller. Basically that meant that they would have only their B-47 to take care of and I would have 12+ (including 3 EB-47Es from Lockbourne) to look after. What they didn't know was that duty hours for crew chiefs had been changed to 24 on and 24 off. Flight line controller duty hours were still 24 on and 48 off. On all of the rest of my deployments to Brize I was assigned as flight line controller upon my arrival. Usually a PCS asst. Crew Chief would be assigned to my aircraft.

The food was really good in the Reflex mess hall, many things being cooked to order. I remember an Indian cook asking SSgt. Billy Roden how he wanted his steak. "Knock its horns off, wipe its ass, and run it across the grill, I'll get it on the other side" was his reply to the astonished cook.

Billy Roden was both lucky and unlucky. He was the crew chief of the B-47 that hit Mount Marcy. He was scheduled to fly that night but we had been hit with an unseasonable thaw and while the flight crew were doing their pre-flight he had slipped and fell in the melting ice. He told the controller to check if anyone else wanted to fly and a young airman from A&E or MMS took his place. I remember several weeks after they found the wreckage all the crew chiefs had to go to the hospital and give fingernail and hair samples to go in our medical records.

One Christmas (or New Year's Day) in the early '60s, the sirens went off around 10 AM (normal time to check the sirens was at noon). Soon I got the call to alert the pyramid and come to work immediately – BROKEN ARROW. I arrived at my B-47 about fifteen minutes later and found out what had happened. When the flight crews came out to preflight in the alert area, a crew chief had applied power and was standing in the aft wheel well out of the wind when the aft gear started chattering. It shook the gear lock pins out and the gear started up almost trapping the crew chief in the wheel well. The gear came up, and the JATO rack went up into the aft main tank spilling fuel which ran down the ramp into one of the drains running the length of the flight line. We towed our aircraft

away from the drain in the regular parking area and went home to enjoy the rest of the holiday. Someone told me later the crew chief of the alert B-47 was so shaken that they took him to the Base Hospital. I don't know if that's true or not, but yes, the crew chief was Billy Roden.

One time returning from Brize, for some reason I couldn't come back on a B-47 but had to take a C-121. From Brize we went to the Azores, refueled and around 2000 hrs. started to take off. The AC aborted, but after an extensive run-up on one of the engines, we were on our way. Around midnight the engineer informed us that one engine had been shut down and we would be landing short of Plattsburgh. Around 0400 he informed us that another engine was shut down and we would land at the Naval Air Station Argentia, Newfoundland.

We landed shortly after daybreak and around 1400 hrs. we were told that the C-121 required two engine changes and that another would pick us up in the morning. A Navy bus took us to a barracks, the top floor of which was the transit USAF quarters. We were greeted by a young A2c who issued us bedding and told us we were the first AF transits he had seen in six months. He explained that he and SSgt "Smith" (I have forgotten his name) were the only AF personnel assigned to Argentia. He said that St. Smith was at the Navy NCO Club (Petty Officers) and had requested that we NCO's (3 I think) join him and he would buy us a beer. Obviously that sounded good to us. After making sure our airmen knew where to get a beer we NCO's walked over to the club. We walked in and were greeted by a SSgt. that looked to be a few years shy of 100. I couldn't believe that anyone that old could be in the Air Force. Over more than several beers he told us how he had been a crew

chief/mechanic for Gen. Spaatz during the 20's and 30's and told us lots of stories about aviation and aviators of the era. I knew some history about early aviation and most of what he said sounded true to me. We left him at the club around 2200 hrs., the club stayed open 24 hrs. as I remember it.

Around 0800 the next morning Sgt. Smith made sure we had transportation to the flight line, told us good bye and that he was headed to the club for a cold one. We boarded the replacement C-121 and were on our way to Plattsburgh. Thinking on this experience over the years the only thing I could figure was that someone very high in the USAF was looking after Sgt. Smith, hiding and protecting him. At that time (1961?) he had to have been in the AF more than 30 years. I know he is long gone today but I still remember that most unexpected meeting and the interesting stories he told us. One question did occur to me as I was typing this....What did the A2c do to get stationed there???

Coming back from Brize another time, upon arrival at Plattsburgh, the left outrigger wouldn't come down. The Nav and I almost bent the ELGE handle but nothing happened. They scrambled the alert tanker and we took fuel into the right drop tank (1000 lbs, I think). We made a normal landing and as soon as we got stopped I went down and popped the gear down with my trusty screwdriver (all crew chiefs knew how to do this). I put the gear pins in and we taxied on into the parking area.

At times the frost at Brize could be a real problem. One of my duties as flight line controller was around dark I

Memories...continued on page 6



B-47E 53-1864, seen here in the UK in 1964, was a Lockheed built airplane that was delivered to the 68th BW in November, 1955. In 57 it went to the 301st BW where it served until taken by the 100th at the end of 58. The 380th BW received 1864 in 1960 and kept it until December 1965 when it was transferred to storage at Davis-Monthan AFB.



Another 380th airplane in the UK in 1964. 53-1950 was built by Lockheed in 1956, assigned to the 2nd BW until 1962, then to the 380th BW. It was found to have a cracked wing attach forging in 1964, but surprisingly, it was repaired at Douglas-Tulsa, and placed back into service. It was retired to the boneyard in late 1965.



Memories...continued from page 5

would go out to the nearest airplane, get the AP to go with me and lay a dime on top of the wing tip. All night long on the hour I would go out, get the AP and check the dime. When the frost got up to the top of the dime I would go in and wake up the crew chiefs and we would go out and de-ice all the B-47s. I can remember doing it twice a night sometimes.

We had a pretty good idea what was going on across the base in one area. I remember on one of my deployments seeing a B-47 land with bullet holes all over the tail. They taxied it directly into a hangar and closed the door.

I was on the last (as far as I know) reflex B-47 that departed Brize when we turned it back to the British in 1965. We downloaded the last three B-47s on Tuesday, went back across base to the Reflex NCO billet, had a quiet night at the NCO Club and were up early Wednesday morning. We knew our job was done for we carried our mattresses out to a truck where they would be taken to the dump and burned. We proceeded back to the alert area for breakfast. As we finished the meal and were leaving the mess hall to walk out to our aircraft the mess Sgt. told us "We are closing up, if you want any of the photos on the wall, help yourself." I reached over and took down a 15"x20" photo of a B-47 JATO takeoff that had been taken at Brize. That photo (reframed) occupies a special spot in my den to this day. I remember how quiet the flight line looked with only three B-47s sitting there.

The Brize PCS folks helped the three B-47 crew chiefs on engine start (all the other Reflex TDY folks were gone) and we were off. In eight years of flying as a crew chief this was only the second time I had flown with nuclear weapons aboard (we brought back three). The first time I flew with weapons aboard was when six of us deployed out of Plattsburgh to Burlington VT during the Cuban crisis.

When we left the NCO barracks that last morning I remember the faint smell coming from the last room on the left. A couple of years before, we had a party and one of the assistant crew chiefs had spilled a can of sardines behind the radiator. Maybe the Brits got the smell out, we never could.

Speaking of radiators, when we lived in the old WWII barracks one of the radiators was leaking all over the floor (open bay barracks). I called in a work order and after a few days an old Englishman showed up and agreed that it was indeed a leak. After a couple of our beers he started to leave and I asked if he wasn't going to fix the leak. His answer was, "Oh no, that's a hot water leak and I am the cold water man."

In January, 1966, I received an appointment as a Warrant Officer in the Army, and I stayed in the Army until I retired as a CW3, Senior Army Aviator (dual rated Aircraft Maintenance Officer) with two tours flying Hueys and Cobras in VietNam. However, my days with the 380th BW remain as one of the most memorable periods of my military career.

Remember When ?

This vintage clipping was sent in by a member who had found it in an old file. Unfortunately, there's no date or newspaper data visible. Does anyone remember the project and/or the crewmen listed in the photo caption? Air-to-air refuelling made the B-47 into a truly strategic weapon and it became a common operation for SAC B-47 crews. It was always a dangerous procedure and at least five B-47 crashes occurred during its execution. The performance of the later all-jet KC-135 reduced the risks posed by the earlier KC-97 that served well but at much lower altitudes and slower speeds.



PREMIERE SHOWING—This is the first such picture released to the public of a mid-air refueling hook-up between a Boeing B-47 and KC-97 as seen from the boom operator's position in the tanker. This unusual shot was captured as the 306th Bomb Wing at MacDill Air Force Base started the refueling phase of its training program last week. Heretofore, newspaper pictures of refueling operations have been routine shots taken at a parallel angle with the tanker and receiving aircraft. Although they cannot be seen, crewmen aboard the B-47 are Capt. Ernest E. Campbell, chief of the Strategic Air Command refueling team at MacDill, and Majors Arnold Sipes and Joseph E. MacDougall of the 367th Bomb Sq —(Air Force Photo).



When the 2002 Reunion was held in Seattle we found the Museum of Flight's WB-47E to be in fairly bad shape after having sat in the very moist Northwest weather for 23 years. The airplane was externally cleaned and then painted in Boeing's 737 paint shop last year. The basic paint is a special "Phenomenal Silver" to protect it from the elements and closely represent the original metal finish. It is now on display near the entrance to the museum, not far from where Bob Robbins started his takeoff roll in the first flight of the XB-47. 51-7066 served with the 44th BW (53-56), the 380th BW (56-58), the 306th BW (58-60), the 384th BW (60-62), and the 376th BW (62-63). It was delivered to Lockheed on 22 March 1963 to be converted to the WB configuration, and it served with the 9th WRW until delivery (from the 57th WRS) to the Museum at Boeing Field in 1969.

Photo: Don Cassiday



Above, over 75 B-47s are visible in this overhead photo of the Boeing Wichita plant looking north. Left, Stratojets on the Wichita assembly line move toward roll-out. Below, B-47E, 51-2359, trails approach and landing chutes after landing at McConnell. Note the building visible under the nose of the airplane. It is the Wichita Air Terminal, completed in 1935, which now houses the Kansas Aviation Museum. The Museum is on the reunion itinerary for Friday, Sept. 22.

Photos: Boeing



2006 Reunion - Wichita KS

Schedule

Thursday, 21 September

- Reception Dinner Buffet

Friday, 22 September

- Ceremony at McConnell B-47, tour of the base and Kansas Aviation Museum. (optional at additional cost).
- Prairie Rose Chuckwagon Dinner and Show (optional at additional cost).



Saturday, 23 September

- Association Business Meeting (AM)
- Symposium
- Cowtown, Oldtown, and Museum of World Treasures tour (optional at additional cost).
- Banquet Dinner & Program & Dance

Sunday, 24 September

- Departure

Hospitality Room stocked with snacks and beverages and cocktails all three days (21-23).

Registration

Registration forms were mailed to the membership in March. If you did not receive one, a copy may be found on the Association website (www.b-47.com) or by contacting The Reunion BRAT at 360-663-2521, info@TheReunionBRAT.com, or the newsletter editor.

Registration is \$150.00 per person and includes all of the activities except the optional ones which are available at an additional cost.

If you choose to take the McConnell AFB tour, you must include your date of birth and social security number on the registration form.

Lodging

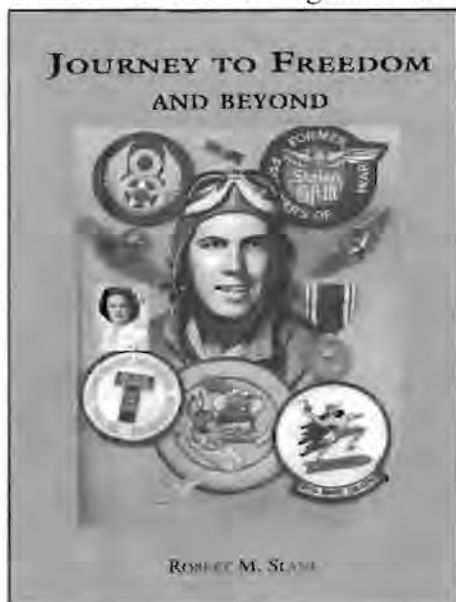
Call the Wichita Marriot at 316-651-0333 no later than 20 August, 2006 to make hotel reservations. Be sure to mention that you are with the B-47 Stratojet Reunion to receive the group rate of \$81/night single or \$87/night double occupancy (plus tax). These rates are available 3 days prior to and after the reunion if you choose to extend your stay.

The Marriot is located on the east side of Wichita at 9100 Corporate Hills Drive near the Raytheon (formerly Beechcraft) plant/airport.



Bookshelf

Journey To Freedom And Beyond by Robert M. Slane is published by Trafford Publishing. The bulk of this book covers the author's WWII experience as a B-17 pilot and subsequent days as a prisoner of war. It is an entertaining and well written book, but



there is a section that will be of special interest to our members. Col. (then Major) Slane was the aircraft commander and sole survivor of the crash of B-47E 52-3360 when it crashed in Canada after complete loss of control. The events that led

to the crash, his ejection, and recovery are related in detail. Col. Slane later flew the B-52 and retired with over 32 years of service. The 283 page book is available for \$25.95 (or \$30.50 in hardback) from Amazon.com. The review copy was obtained from the Eighth Air Force Museum.

Another softcover book obtained from the 8th AF Museum that might be of interest to some of our members is **We Were Crewdogs**, a collection of stories from seventeen B-52 crew members (some of the contributors are members of our Association). The book is available from Tommy Towery, 5709



Pecan Trace, Memphis, TN 38135. He is also seeking stories for a second volume (see his website at www.wewerecrewdogs.com).

Sigmund Alexander has two new books available. **Pictorial History of RAF Upper Heyford, The B-47 Era 1953-66**, and **Pictorial History of RAF Bruntingthorpe, Chelveston, Fairford, and Lakenheath**. Each softbound book is 52 pages in length and the cost is \$15.00 for each, including shipping and handling. Alex is also working on histories of the bases in Spain and North Africa. He can be contacted at 12110 Los Cerdos Dr., San Antonio, TX 78233.



Notes From The Editor

Did you fly or maintain B-47s with the MA-2 bombing/navigation system? There were fourteen or fifteen airplanes modified with that B-52 system on the Lockheed production line. SAC wanted a full operational test and selected one squadron in the 44th BW for the job. We don't know the squadron but we do know the airplanes were delivered in the summer and fall of 1956. Drop me a line if you have any knowledge of this project (address on page 2).

We try to maintain a good balance of news, articles, and photographs, but our success depends on our members. We've had some wonderful stories over the years from men who decided to record their memories. We depend on you to provide us with good material that we will all enjoy reading. Send us those stories now by mail or email. Don't worry about the format, we'll take care of that.

Hope to see you in Wichita!

Supply Room

Items are available from George Brierley, 5342 6th Place South, Gulfport, FL 33707. Make checks payable to the B-47 Stratojet Association.

Association T-Shirt	\$15
Association Pin	\$10
Association Patch	\$5
Association Mouse Pad	\$3
Association Mug (new design)	\$10

Pewter B-47 Tie Pin	\$5
1,000 hour Pin	\$25
3,500 Hour Pin	\$25
B-47 Commorative Medal	\$10
B-47 Stationery (25 sheets/25 envelopes)	\$13

Application For Membership - The B-47 Stratojet Association

Dues are \$15 per year payable every January, or see lifetime membership rates at the bottom of this form. Dues payments should be made out to the B-47 Stratojet Association and mailed to Bob Griffiths (address below).

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Date of Birth (for life members): _____

Military - Your Position In The Air Force: _____

Bomb Wing(s) You Served With: _____

_____ BW from _____ to _____

_____ BW from _____ to _____

_____ BW from _____ to _____

Civilian - Position/Job _____ Company: _____

From _____ to _____

Comments: _____

Life Membership

Age	Dues
59 & under	\$300
60-64	\$250
65-69	\$200
70-74	\$150
75-79	\$100
80 & up	\$ 50

Dues are payable each January.

Payments and this form should be mailed to:

Bob Griffiths, Treasurer/B-47 Stratojet Assn.,
303 Double Eagle Road
Burgaw, NC 28425-8559

~This form may be copied to avoid cutting newsletter~

B-47 Stratojet Association
P. O. Box 1144
Brenham, TX
77834-1144

Non Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Brenham, TX
77833
Permit No.
#84



~Remember To Pay Your Dues~

~2006 Reunion • Wichita KS • 21-23 September~