

The Stratojet Newsletter

November 2006 Volume 26

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



From The President's Desk

The Wichita reunion is history. I believe those who attended share my view that it was a great one. Our reunion committee headed by Andy Labosky and Dave Hitchcock did a terrific job and we all had a wonderful time.

Certainly a highlight of the reunion was the ceremony at McConnell AFB where we dedicated a plaque to our deceased colleague, Bob Robbins. As the pilot of the first XB-47 flight, Boeing's B-47 project manager, and as a charter member of the B-47 Stratojet Association, Bob endeared himself to us all. Bob's daughter, Patti Froehlich and his son, Bob Robbins Jr. were present and shared their memories with us before they unveiled the plaque located on one of the pylons supporting that beautifully restored B-47.

We enjoyed some great events such as our symposium at which Al Lloyd, author of the definitive book on the B-47, Alex Alexander, our past and future president spoke and Gary Hoselton showed a wonderful movie on SAC. There

Under the wing of the McConnell B-47, Association President Cassidy addresses the crowd gathered for the dedication of the Robbins plaque

were other fun events but, as is usually the case, the highlight of the reunion was seeing old comrades with whom we served during the Cold War (yep, you remember that one, it's the one we won!).

Each year, of course, we are saddened by the fact that dear friends have left us for a higher command but we rejoice in the memories of service to our country and of the joy of High Flight.

As I step down as your president, I thank you for your support through these two years and I look forward to joining you all in Georgia in 2008.

Don Cassidy



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Roll Call of Honor

Charles E. Baker, passed away September 2005. He was an A/C at Lockbourne.

These members were listed on the Reunion bulletin board. We have no further information.

Fred Gates, Pearsal R. Penning, Marvin Mounts

Correction: **Curtis L. Eskew's** name was misspelled in the last newsletter. He passed away this year in Sarasota and had been a B-47 A/C.

Important Reminders

- **Pay your dues for 2007** (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. **NOTE:** Bob's email address is: bobnsara@cc.rr.com. The address on the inside cover of the directory is wrong!
- Send newsletter articles, photos, news about members, etc. to Mike Habermehl, Editor. **NOTE:** new email address: cmhs@sbcglobal.net
- Invite a friend to join the Association.

Of Note

Check out the B-47 cockpit photos at www.uscockpits.com

The January 2007 issue of **FlyPast** magazine had two B-47 related articles: *Cold War Reflex Action* and *Swept-wing Sword*. It is usually available at Barnes & Noble and Borders.

The B-47 Stratojet Newsletter is published three times each year. It is intended solely for the enjoyment, comraderie, and enlightenment of the membership of the B-47 Stratojet Association. Requests to use or reprint any portion of the contents should be directed to the Editor. Contributions of material to the Newsletter should be sent to the Editor, B-47 Stratojet Newsletter, P. O. Box 1144, Brenham, TX 77834-1144, mikeh@sbcglobal.net.

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

Tony DiPietro Named Wright Brothers Master Pilot



A half-century of safe flying has earned Association member Anthony DiPietro the rare honor of being named a Wright Brothers Master Pilot. The Federal Aviation Administration handed out the award to the North Little Rock pilot last fall, putting him in an aviation category shared by little more than 500 people ever.

DiPietro, 75, earned his private-pilot's license as a 20-year old and spent two decades in the U.S. Air Force as a gunner, navigator and bombardier before embarking on a career as a flight instructor and charter pilot for Central Flying Service, where he amassed most of his 15,000 hours in the air, the equivalent of more than a year aloft.

DiPietro's career in aviation spanned combat missions over Korea in a World War II-era B-29 Superfortress to piloting a Learjet. As a charter pilot, his passengers included many of the state's leading politicians: the late U.S. Congressman Wilbur D. Mills, former President Clinton and, on his last charter flight in 1996, then Lt. Gov. Mike Huckabee.

In between, DiPietro flew 1800 hrs. as a bomb-nav

in the B-47 at Lockbourne (1954-61), flew twice the speed of sound in the B-58 Hustler and visited 42 of the 50 states while amassing more than 1.5 million miles in the air over 50 years, all without a mishap.

DiPietro never had an accident while flying, but he admits to some close calls. DiPietro said his Air Force training instilled the discipline he needed to fly safely for a half-century. In the Air Force, he said he learned to appreciate checklists, which every pilot should review before, during and after flight but sometimes don't.

DiPietro doesn't own his own aircraft and rarely flies nowadays. He has turned to flying radio-controlled model aircraft — a hobby that isn't as easy as it looks, even for a veteran pilot.

Flying a radio-controlled model is different from piloting the full size models, he said. "If I had a Play-Station, I'd probably be a better flier. Most of the crashes happen when you're over-controlling the control stick. It's real sensitive."

Based on an article in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette by Noel E. Oman. Photo: Stephen B. Thornton



Don Cassidy presents a plaque and B-47 model to Mark Natola in recognition of his years of dedicated service to the Association as Secretary. Mark will be joining the Association's Board of Governors.

**B-47 Stratojet Association
Biennial Business Meeting Report
Wichita KS – 23 September 2006**

**Balance Sheet
15 September 2006
Assets**

The biennial meeting of the B-47 Stratojet Association was held at the Marriott Hotel in Wichita during the 2006 reunion. Following are the highlights of that meeting.

1. President Don Cassidy welcomed all to the meeting.
2. Don Cassidy read and displayed a plaque which he will present to Mark Natola in November. It expresses the association's appreciation to Mark for his many years of service as secretary of the association.
3. Financial Report: Cassidy read the 15 September finance report provided by Secretary/Treasurer Bob Griffiths. The association is in good financial health with a \$47,459.70 balance. Details are in the report to be published in the newsletter.
4. Membership Report: Dick Purdum, Membership Chairman, reported on his efforts at increasing membership. The software purchased for him to use has more than paid for itself with 731 current paid up members and a total of \$5330 in new dues.
5. SAC Museum Restoration: Dick Purdum reported that, to date, we have contributed \$25,600 to the restoration of the B-47 at the Strategic Air and Space Museum. The B-47 project is now on the schedule after the next two aircraft. It should be completed in time for our 2010 reunion which is planned for Omaha. Dick provided flyers and encouraged all to purchase a brick in the restoration project and these flyers were given to all attendees.
6. 2008 Reunion Proposal: Bob Bowman presented a proposal to hold the 2008 reunion in Cobb County Georgia. Another proposal to hold it in Tampa came from the floor. Following discussion, the members voted to accept Bob's proposal and the 2008 reunion will be in Cobb County Georgia.
7. The slate of officers suggested by the Board was presented to the members. No nominations were made from the floor and the slate was elected unanimously as follows:
 - a. President – Sigmund Alexander
 - b. Vice President – David Hitchcock
 - c. Secretary/Treasurer – Bob Griffiths
 - d. Newsletter Editor – Mike Habermehl
 - e. Membership Chair – Dick Purdum
 - f. Quartermaster – George Brierly
 - g. Board Members – Don Cassidy, John Daly, Andy Labosky, Ken Tollin, Wen Painter, Jim Diamond
8. President Don Cassidy expressed his great appreciation for the terrific job done by the reunion committee in planning the Wichita reunion and all concurred in this appreciation.

Current Assets:	
Cash	\$30,233.26
Short Term Investments:	
Bank of American CD @ 2.59% (matures 22 May 2007)	\$15,517.60
Total Current Assets	\$45,750.86
Long-Term Assets	\$ 0.00
Total Assets	\$45,750.86
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities:	
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 0.00
Long-term Liabilities	\$ 0.00
Total Liabilities	\$ 0.00
Net Liabilities & Assets	\$45,750.86

Note: Above figures include \$26,810.00 in 258 prepaid Lifetime Member dues.

**Income Statement
As of September 15, 2006**

2005 Year End	
Total Assets	\$47,596.36
Receipts:	
Memberships	\$16,090.00
Merchandise Sales	\$ 762.00
Donations for Restoration&Bricks	\$ 4,500.00
Gifts	\$ 334.00
Total Receipts	\$22,561.06
Expenses:	
Air & Space Museum Donation	\$14,500.00
Reunion Expenses	\$ 2,625.04
Printing	\$ 2,836.00
Postage	\$ 1,063.16
Merchandise	\$ 1,673.52
Total Expenses	\$22,697.72
15 Sept Balance	\$47,459.70

Expenses over Revenue so far in 2006 = \$136.66
Balance of Reunion expenses and revenues are not included.

The following report was submitted by Treasurer Bob Griffiths at the 2006 Business Meeting.

Wichita 2006



Jim Harrison at registration.



Above & below, food & fellowship around the tables at the welcoming buffet.



Above, the buffet line on Thursday evening. Right, the bus loads for the dedication at McConnell AFB



Above, MAFB Historian, Steve Larson. Right, The 367th always shows up in force for the reunions. Here they are under the nose of their favorite airplane. Harold Siegfried, Ken Tollin, Harold Manhart, Richard Thurston, Joe Franz, Lee Laws, Owen Dickey, Edwin Eggert, Ken Hammerberg, Charles Morrell.





Rob Robbins and Patti Froehlich unveil the plaque honoring their dad.

Eating again! Serving line at the Bob Dole Center at McConnell AFB.



Gary Hoselton, below, presented a great historical SAC film.



Above, the reunion crowd looks on during the dedication ceremony at the MAFB B-47.



Left, lunch at the Dole Center was accompanied by presentations on the history of MAFB. Below, Rob Robbins stands beside a memorial to those lost in service with the 3520th CCTW.





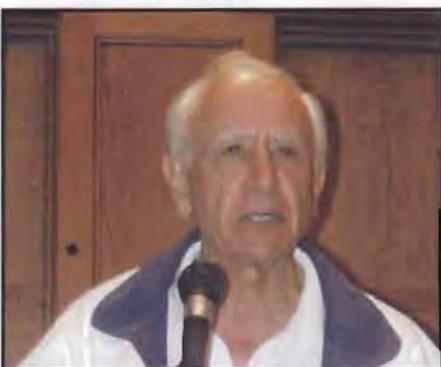
Swinging at the Prairie Rose



Left, waiting for the Kansas Aviation Museum tour. Above, the Prairie Rose Chuckwagon Supper and Western Stage Show.



Below, Alex shares his research on SAC bases. Right, The Prairie Rose Opera House



Hank Cervantes, author of *Piloto*, talks about his days in the B-47. He also flew the B-58.



Al Lloyd, author of the great new B-47 history, was the featured symposium speaker.



It was good to see Jim and Susan Fraser. Jim was the third pilot to fly the XB-47.



Above, Paul Monroe serenaded the ladies at the Saturday night banquet. Below, Anna Lou & Jack Sturgeon, Hank Cervantes, Albert Meyer.

Al Grimm, speaker for the Saturday night banquet.



Al Alba, Angel Corral, Honor Guard.



Above, Jane & William Guenther. Below, Raimonde Aubrey, Angel Corral.



Below, Gus Letto, Jack Scott



Rob & Debbie Robbins



Patti & Dave Froehlich



The 40th BW Association begins as the B-47 reunion ends. Jim Diamond and Bud Day welcome 40th members.

The Wichita Reunion Committee did a great job. Left to right, David Hitchcock, Betty Lane, Ann Stiles of The Reunion Brat, and Andy Labosky.

Engineer Honored



Past President Don Cassiday presents Evans Erikson a Certificate of Honorary Life Membership in the B-47 Stratojet Association on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

The B-47 Stratojet Association presented an Honorary Lifetime Membership and letter of appreciation to Evans Erikson for his work in resolving electrical problems in the modification of the B-47 for ECM equipment. His research and development work with the Sundstrand Corporation resulted in an "automatic paralleling system" that enabled the aircraft's generators to work together developing sufficient power to support increasing demands as additional systems were added. Westinghouse eventually got the contract to make the change and Erikson held the patent.



Left, Col Harrison Smith, 22nd Air Refueling Wing, addresses the dedication ceremony crowd at MAFB. Below, Patti Froehlich, Bob Robbins' daughter, remembers her dad under the wing of the McConnell B-47. She ended her remarks by reading "High Flight."



Robbins' Plaque Dedicated

A highlight of the 2006 Reunion was the ceremony for dedicating a plaque in memory of Bob Robbins, who made the first flight of the XB-47 on December 17, 1947.

Personnel from McConnell AFB fully supported the ceremony that took place alongside the beautiful B-47E on display at the base. Colonel T. Harrison Smith, Jr., Vice-Commander of the 22nd Air Refueling Wing spoke to those gathered and said, "I welcome the B-47 reunion group and thank you for your service to our nation. We are here today to unveil a plaque honoring Robert M. Robbins, the B-47 Stratojet, and those who served as B-47 aircrew members during the Cold War... Because of veterans like you, the B-47 crew members, we are free. Because of veterans present and future, we'll remain free. I thank each and everyone of you for taking time on this day to honor Robert M. Robbins and the Cold War deterrance delivered by all B-47 crews -- your presence here today pays tribute to those who made sacrifices for our country and those who continue to fight for freedom's cause."

On hand to accept the plaque was Robert M. Robbins, Jr. and Patti (Robbins) Froehlich. In her remarks, Mrs. Froelich said, "Dad (and Mom) would be humbled and honored by the Association's recognition of his contribution to aviation and to the military strength of America. Dad was passionate about Aviation! As children we grew up with bedtime stories. However, our stories were seldom from a book, but rather true stories Dad told about his "flying days" as he called them. In April 2005 Dad let me video a two-hour talk about his life. He ended with these words "I still thank God every night for allowing me to have the life that I've had. I have had a wonderful, wonderful career and a wonderful personal life. I was 31 when I flew the XB-47, and I remember, soon after, making the statement that I had had more wonderful experiences at that point and young age, than most people have in a lifetime. And the fun has gone on since. I thank everyone who has been so good to me." Our family is deeply touched by the Association's dedication today."



Bookshelf

The B-47 Bases in Morocco 1953-63 is the latest from Sigmund Alexander. The softbound pictorial is 70 pages long with many color photos. The book is available from Alex at 12110 Los Cerdos Dr., San Antonio, TX 78233. Cost is \$18.00 which includes shipping and handling.



War & Peace In The Air is the fifth and final volume in the *Aviation Century* series by Ron Dick and Dan Patterson. With over 350 pages, and loaded with many beautiful color photographs, this volume covers military aviation from the post WWII era to the present, aviation safety, and the future of flight. There is a nice short piece on the B-47 in which the authors call it "...an extraordinary technical achievement, bearing almost no resemblance to its predecessors and pointing the way to the future for large aircraft in both military and civil aviation." There are three very nice color photos of the RB-47H in the National Museum of the USAF, but unfortunately the authors identify it as the B-47E testbed that was previously on display (now sitting on the ramp by the restoration hangar). List price is \$49.95 but you can do better than that at Amazon.com.

More Reunion Photos

Many of you have met James Villa at the reunions and you know of his work to preserve the history of the B-47 and the 307th BW. He and Bobbi have put their 2006 Reunion photos on the web and you can find them at www.307bwasssoc.org. Click on *links*, scroll to *James Villa* and click. The photos are in the *Wichita* folder. While you are there, take a look at "jim&bobbi's B-47 creations" based on the display B-47s at McConnell and the Oklahoma City Fairground.

Military Reunion Website

John Moore of The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA) sent the following note.

"TREA is providing the Military Reunion Listings as a *FREE* service to the veteran community. I search the internet looking for reunions and then send requests for the information to the listed POC. I sent 2,108 reunion organizations e-mails requesting information on their 2006 reunions, and unfortunately 25 % failed to respond. We have 1,398 listings on the calendar year 2006 listing. With the next listing update, we will have almost 500 reunion listings for calendar years 2007 & 2008.

Please take a look at our web site, www.trea.org, scroll down the left side and click on *Reunions/Buddies*, and this will bring up the reunion page. As reunions are completed, they are transferred to the Completed Listing at the end of the month. There, they will remain as a reference point for someone looking for a unit contact. My intention is that each calendar year reunions will be individually listed."

Thank You!!!

A big "thank you" to Andy Labosky and his on-site reunion team. He was ably assisted by David Hitchcock and Betty Lane. They have worked hard for the last two years and we appreciate it.

Our thanks to the folks at McConnell AFB. They went out of their way to accommodate us and make the dedication ceremony a wonderful success.

The staff at the Kansas Aviation Museum made us feel welcome with helpful brochures and information for touring their facility. We wish them much success in preserving Kansas aviation history.

Thanks to Gus Letto, our faithful photographer, who took over 125 photos of the reunion and carefully documented each one. Lou Malucci and Harold Siegfried also sent in photos.

"Thank you" to all of you who have sent in stories and articles for the newsletter. You keep us going!

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 T-Shirt with Pocket	\$17
Association Pin	\$10
Association mouse pad	\$3

2006 Reunion Wine Glass	\$3
Association Coaster (2)	\$2.50
SPECIAL: 6 wine glasses/6 coasters	\$20
Association Mug (new design)	\$10
1,000 hour pin	\$25
Note Pad with Pen	\$4
B-47 Commemorative medal	\$10

Application For Membership - The B-47 Stratojet Association

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: _____

Dues

One Year: \$15.00

Life Memberships

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~

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An EB-47E, 53-1929, of the 301st BW sits on alert in the snow and under the cold, gray skies of Brize Norton. 1929 was a Lockheed-built airplane delivered to the 2nd BW in 1956, then to the 301st from 1959 until 1963. It finished service with the 376th and was retired to Davis-Monthan on 17 February 1965.

Photo: Augustine Letto

Pay Your Dues For 2007 Today



Robert Morris Robbins Jr., left, talks with retired B-47 crew chief Art Caithaml under the wing of the jet on static display at McConnell Air Force Base on Friday. Robbins' father flew the first B-47 in 1947.

Mike Hutmecher/The Wichita Eagle

B-47 association pays tribute to first Stratojet pilot

BY JOE RODRIGUEZ
The Wichita Eagle

Nearly 60 years ago, Robert Robbins, a Boeing project engineer, became the first pilot of the B-47 Stratojet bomber.

On Friday, a memorial was dedicated in his honor at the site of the B-47 on static display at McConnell Air Force Base.

More than 300 people attended the dedication ceremony. Many in attendance are members of the B-47 Stratojet Association, a national group formed in 1996 to preserve the legacy of the jet. The association is holding its biennial reunion in Wichita this weekend.

Please see **MEMORIAL**, Page 2B

MEMORIAL

From Page 1B

The jet has significant ties to Wichita. Most of the B-47s, the world's first swept-wing, all-jet bomber, were built at Boeing Wichita. McConnell became the first B-47 training base in 1951.

Robbins, who piloted the jet's maiden flight on Dec. 17, 1947, was a member of the association. Robbins and his wife, Ann, both died last year.

"He'd be humbled by all of this," Robbins' daughter, Patricia Foehlick of Scottsdale, Ariz., said following the unveiling of the bronze plaque. It was set on the concrete footing of the static jet display.

"I'm sure he's smiling down, very proud."

Retired U.S. Air Force Col. Don Cassidy, president of the association, said the association wanted to come up with a way to pay tribute to Robbins.

"We thought this was as good a way as any," he said.

During the dedication, Bob Robbins Jr. said the memorial was a fitting tribute to his father.



Mike Hutmecher/The Wichita Eagle

People attending a dedication ceremony look over a B-47 bomber at McConnell Air Force Base. A plaque was added to the B-47 display in honor of Robert Robbins, who flew the first bomber.

"My dad," he said, "if he were standing here today, would probably be grinning that great big grin of his and looking at this airplane and thinking back to that December 17, 1947, date when he took off for the first

time."

He also said the memorial was about more than his father.

"This memorial may be dedicated to my father, but it's a memorial to all of you," he told the audience, most of whom had

served in the military or worked on the plane.

"This memorial is about each and every one of you."

Reach Joe Rodriguez at 316-268-6644 or jrodriguez@wichitaeagle.com.