The Strato Jet Newsletter

Spring 2017 Volume 49

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

From The President's Desk ~ The Gospel of Airpower

In 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright made their first flight. Many nations around the world immediately grasped the warfare potential of the airplane but our own Army took three years before buying their first plane.

When World War I came along, the airplane was in its infancy but demonstrated exceptional potential for armed conflict. A primitive form of "strategic bombardment" was attempted by both sides. Based on the experience of the war, an Italian, Giulio Douhet, wrote a book entitled ***The Command of the Air***, in which he preached the gospel of airpower. He believed the bomber would always get through, that it would destroy the enemy's productive capacity, break their morale, and lead to defeat. The implication was that airpower alone would win wars.

This doctrine became a key principle for the U S Army's Air Corps. At the Air Corps Tactical School at Maxwell Field, future leaders of the Air Corps studied and became committed to this concept. Men like Gen. Billy Mitchell, Gen Hap Arnold, and Curt Lemay among others, developed an extraordinary belief in airpower. Billy Mitchell was court martialed because of his ardent commitment to the concept.

The US built a series of heavy bombers, the B-18, the B-17, B-24 and ultimately the B-29. With Hap Arnold as Chief of the Army's air forces we went full tilt into heavy strategic bombardment in Europe and Asia. We laid waste to the European continent and Japan. Ultimately, the Axis powers capitulated and Japan surrendered.

TB-47Bs fly over Kill Devil Hill and the Wright Brothers' Memorial illustrating the progress of Air Power from Kittyhawk to the Stratojet era. Photo: USAF

Immediately after the war, we conducted a Strategic Bombing Survey to ascertain how effective strategic airpower had been. Surprisingly, the conclusions were less than clear. First, they found that morale had not been a factor. Neither the Nazi bombing of England nor the Allied bombing of Germany had led to morale problems much less to an overwhelming desire to surrender. Secondly, production had not suffered as expected. We found that production had not been stopped but we defeated the Axis by overwhelming them with our production and destroying their air forces in the air. In Asia, after a devastating fire bombing that all but destroyed the country, it took two atom bombs to ultimately convince the Japanese to surrender.

Gospel*...continued on page 14*

Roll Call Of Honor

Wayne B. Adkins of Valdosta GA, 29 August 2016

William Canaday of Longport NJ, 22 December 2016

Alfred S. Depres, Jr. of Hudson NH, 7 March 2017

Leslie L. Dunning of Dayton OH, 13 September 2015

Jesse P. Jacobs, Jr. of Las Cruces NM, 9 September 2016

Robert O. McCartan of Tucson AZ, 1 February 2017

Robert E. McDuff of Marietta GA, 16 May 2017

Herman E. Schumacher of Huntersville NC, 4 March 2016

Roland E. Speckman of Fairfield CA, 24 July 2016

Ralph W. Zoerlein of Seal Beach CA, 30 December 2014

B-47 Merchandise

The internet has a remarkable array of B-47 products at a site called ***cafepress.com*** and we encourage you to consider these if you are looking for B-47 items. The Association no longer stocks items and we suggest you take a look at this website. It has been recently updated with new products featuring the red/black "horn button." Use the link below to go directly to the page with products featuring the Association logo:
http://www.cafepress.com/b47stratojetassociation
Searching the site using "b-47" will also bring up many other products featuring your favorite airplane.

Important Reminder

- **Pay your dues for 2017** (the number on your mailing label indicates the year through which you are paid-up).
- 2018 Reunion - Omaha NE - Date to be determined
- Send stories, letters, memories, & photos to Editor, cmhs@sbcglobal.net, PO Box 1144, Brenham TX 77834

The B-47 Stratojet Newsletter is published three times each year. It is intended solely for the enjoyment, camaraderie, and enlightenment of the membership of the B-47 Stratojet Association. Opinions expressed in the articles are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the 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, cmhs@sbcglobal.net.

General Electric Trophy Race 1955

The First GE Trophy Race- Cross Country with Multi-engine Jet Aircraft

by Douglas Weedman

Like so many individuals from his generation my father, Jim Weedman, was never one to talk about his military experiences. The rare times he did share with family we had to drag it out of him. A couple years before his death I sat down with him and reminisced about the GE Trophy that sat on the side board in his office. I have also had the opportunity to visit with my mother and Mrs. Glenn Fornes and her daughters regarding the event. My recollection is not that clear as I was three years old when the race took place.

My father flew B-47's with the 443rd Bomb Squadron/320th Bomb Wing, at March AFB, Riverside, California from 1954 to 1959. His crew in 1955 for the race consisted of Major Leonard (Red) Stevens, aircraft commander; my father, Major Freeman (Jim) Weedman, pilot; Captain Glenn Fornes, navigator and S/ Sergeant James P. Flohe, crew chief. Several weeks prior to the race the crew and especially Captain Fornes met with the Wing Planning Staff to evaluate and plot the most favorable route and weather conditions. The crew also flew to Castle AFB, and worked with GE project engineers and SAC maintenance crews to attempt to get the most out of each engine.

Photo at left shows the trophy that Jim Weedman was awarded for his part in the 1955 GE Trophy Race. Photo: Douglas Weedman

The race itself took place on September 4, 1955 starting at March, AFB, and finishing at the Philadelphia International Airport. This happened to coincide with the Labor Day Holiday weekend and the 1955 National Air Show. The three B-47's in the race represented the 443rd BS/320th BW, March A.F.B.. The other aircraft represented the 3rd Squadron/26th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Lockburne AFB,and the 396th Squadron/306th Bombardment Wing, MacDill AFB. The aircraft models included a "B" modified to an "E" standard, a Boeing Wichita built RB-47E and a Lockeed Marietta-built B-47E-II.

The aircraft took off from March in ten minute intervals starting at 0730hrs. All the crews flew a great circle route. The crews were required to fly between 21,000 and 30,000 feet. The route flown by the crew from the 443rd took them up around Cincinnati, Ohio where they picked up a 60 mph tailwind. The winning aircraft landed with a winning time of 3 hours 57 minutes and

GE...continued next page

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59.2 seconds, traveling 2337 miles. Its average speed was 589.294 mph. The aircraft from the 26th and the 306th finished second and third respectively. The navigation equipment on the winning aircraft went out 10 minutes from the Philadelphia airport and they landed with 600 gallons to spare.

The initial trophy presentation on the field was made by George E. Fouch, general manager of General Electric's jet engine division. Apparently there was a difference of opinion about where the large trophy should go. The GE people thought it should go to the New York City headquarters. The crew had another plan and stored it in the bombay and returned to March with it. Families were present at March when the crew returned.

Leonard Stevens went on to the Pentagon and Omaha. He was the last squadron commander of the 443rd prior to it being inactivated.

Glenn Fornes continued to fly B-47s and B-52s as a navigator. He later was the squadron commander of the 740th Missile Squadron, Minot AFB. His daughter, Patricia, was the first woman in Air Force history to command an operational missile squadron, the same 740th her Father commanded.

Jim Weedman went thru his initial pilot training at Moore Field. He Flew 'the Hump' in WWII. Recalled during the Korean War, he flew B-47's and B-52's and became an instructor pilot in 52's. He later became Squadron Commander of the 596th Bomb Squadron, Barksdale AFB, and then Vice Wing/Wing Commander of the 449th Bombardment Wing, Kincheloe AFB.

References:
Flight and Aircraft Engineer, "Off to Philadelphia for America's National Show, Part I" H.F.King, No. 2434, Vol.68, 16 September, 1955 (Flightglobal.com)

LA Times/AP Wirephoto September 5, 1955

"Brief History of the 443rd Bombardment Squadron, 1942 - 1960, ' 1st Lt. Arturo Aviles, Jr.

YouTube 1955 National Air Show (specifically 2hr - 2:04). Winning aircraft has two diagonal stripes on its tail.

Special thanks to Ann Weedman and Jeri Fornes and her daughters for helping to share some of the undocumented first hand historical observations.

All photos supplied by Douglas Weedman.

Editor's note - We appreciate Doug sharing this story about his father with our members. Some of you may have known Jim Weedman and the other crewmen and, perhaps, you recall the GE Trophy Race. It is wonderful to know that our children know our stories. We hope you have shared your stories with your family.

Below left, this impressive trophy was awarded to the winners of the GE Trophy Race in 1955. This formal ceremony was held at March AFB. L to R, Capt. Glenn Fornes, nav/obs; Col. Robert B. Miller, Commander 320th BW; Maj. Leonard (Red) Stevens, Aircraft Commander; Lt. Col. Richard M. Hoban, Commander 443rd BS; Major Freedman (Jim) Weedman, Pilot; Brig.Gen. Charles B. Westover, Commander, 12th AD. The photo on the right shows a GE tech representative visiting with the crew, Lt. Col. Stevens and SSgt. James P. Flohe.

B47 jet bomber lands at Philadelphia to win General Electric Trophy at National Aviati

Top of page, the flight was well covered in newspapers. Top right, trophy presentation at March AFB. Above, Jim Weedman's official portrait taken in 1970. Right, Stevens, Weedman and Fornes families.

The Second Stratojet – A Brief History

Above, XB-47, 46-066, being readied for its first flight on the ramp at Boeing Field, Seattle. Photo: Boeing Historical Archives

No one seems to know when the second XB-47 (46-066) was rolled out from Boeing Seattle's Plant 1. However, we do know that it first took to the air on 21 July 1948. Bob Robbins and Scott Osler flew the airplane from Boeing Field's runway with the spectacular departure highlighted by the use of eighteen bottles of JATO. Interestingly, Robbins had already "flown" the tail of 066 in the NACA Ames wind tunnel while the first airplane was being readied for flight. The airplane was accepted by the USAF (18 December 1948) after Phase I testing at Moses Lake and it soon settled into the testing program that would lead to quantity production of the Stratojet.

When the Air Force decided it needed one of its latest designs to participate in nuclear testing in the South Pacific (Operation GREENHOUSE), they decided on a B-47A. However, the "A" models were just being produced and when available they would be involved in high priority testing with Project WIBAC at Wichita, so 46-066 was given the job. The airplane was modified with various strain gauges and other sensors to measure the impact of an atomic blast on the airframe. The most noticeable feature was a bulged bomb bay. The XB-47 flew in the tests from March to June 1951.

After its role in the nuclear tests, the airplane was sent to Chanute AFB and was used as a training aid by 3345th Technical Training Wing. When that came to an end, the airplane went to display/museum status (14 December 1954). 066 had almost 338 hours on its airframe by the time it was retired. The airplane had also acquired a B-47A-type nose. Over the years the XB moved from ramp to hangar and back again. It eventually wound up on the parade ground after it was no longer needed for training. There it displayed a number of different markings over the years until the weather took its toll on markings and airframe alike.

One of the more unusual things that happened was that someone decided to "restore" 066 to represent Lt. James Obenauf's airplane that he landed from his copilot's station with the canopy missing (that story is on our website and it is also recorded in detail in a book, ***Twenty Seconds To Live***, 1959). The nose was modified to look like a B-47E, covering the XB-style glass in the nose and adding a reproduction bombsight and APS-54 antenna.

The first flight of 45-066 took place on 21 July 1948 with the aid of the internal JATO system. Boeing obviously had a lot of confidence in their new airplane by this time. Photo: Boeing Historical Archives

When Chanute closed in 1993, a museum (Octave Chanute Aerospace Museum) was established and 066 was included in the collection. It was finally moved from the parade ground to the ramp. There it was eventually brought under the watchful

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***The Second**...continued from page 6*

care of our Pete Troesch and B-47 Association volunteers who spent many a day slowing, arresting and reversing the corrosion that was eating away at the airframe. They put a lot of toil into the airplane only to find out in early 2015 that the Museum was closing and the airplanes were to be moved or scrapped.

This very early photo taken at Chanute AFB shows the XB in its early ATC markings. Gus Letto snapped this shot while there to take tests prior to entering the USAF in 1954.

The National Museum of the United States Air Force (NMUSAF) carried the XB-47 on its inventory but they had no place for it at Dayton, and there seemed to be no one else to take on the very expensive task of moving the airplane. Then there appeared to be a bit of hope as the Air Force Flight Test Museum at Edwards AFB indicated an interest. What lay before them was a daunting challenge of fund raising and moving the airplane.

Your Association pledged to donate $10,000.00 dollars to the fund to save and move 066 and we tried to rally support for what seemed to be the only viable option. The Museum was a long way from its goal when Boeing stepped up and agreed to fund the move

The third set of markings on 066 are for the 3355th Training Squadron (ATC). The upper vertical tail appears to be white or gray, perhaps the start of an attempt to completely paint the airplane as was done sometime later. *Photo: Howard Hendry*

as part of their centennial celebration. Everyone rejoiced and, in September of 2016, WorldWide Aircraft Recovery disassembled 066 at Chanute and moved it to Edwards (see article in last Newsletter, #48, Winter 2016). The airplane is now being restored to appear as its older sister, 46-065, did when it first flew on 17 December 1947.*

Above, the airplane later appeared as Obenauf's B-47 with a SAC banner and anti-flash belly paint. Note also, the nose glass has been covered and the bombsight cover and APS-54 antenna have been added.

We are thankful to the Air Force Flight Test Museum, George Welsh, The Flight Test Foundation Board of Directors, and the Boeing Company for making it possible to preserve this very important airplane. There are three very significant B-47s in museums today that help tell the story of your days serving this country in the Cold War.

***The Second**...continued on page 8*

Left, the airplane is seen in what is thought to be its second set of markings, displaying 3359 for the 3359th Training Squadron on the vertical tail along with what appears to be unit badges on the nose and tail. Note the lightning bolt markings on the edge of the wing tip.

Photo: Habermehl Collection

***The Second**...continued from page 7*

The Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum in Ashland NE continues to restore its B-47E as the only bomber model displayed indoors. The NMUSAF has the RB-47H as a centerpiece of its Cold War exhibit in Dayton. Now, the second B-47 produced will be preserved to show how this extraordinary design changed the world of aviation forever.

** 46-065 was cut up, with its fuselage installed on a trailer, to be used as a traveling recruiting aid for the USAF. No one seems to know what happened to it after that role was finished.*

Above, 066 has lost the SAC markings, gained a yellow horizontal tail stripe and been painted gray. Yet, it still carries the tail number of Obenauf's airplane.
Photo: Dave Hanson

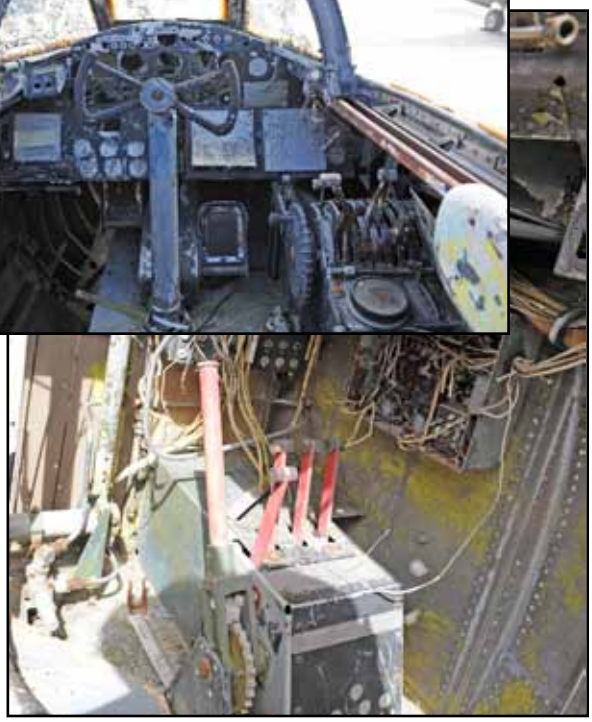
Left, the SAC markings are gone and the canopy has been painted black. However, the most important change here was the application of the proper tail number, 46-066. This would be the last markings applied before the XB was moved from the parade ground to the ramp. It was there that our volunteers were able to get their hands on the bird and begin some restoration. *Photo: Charles Pomazal*

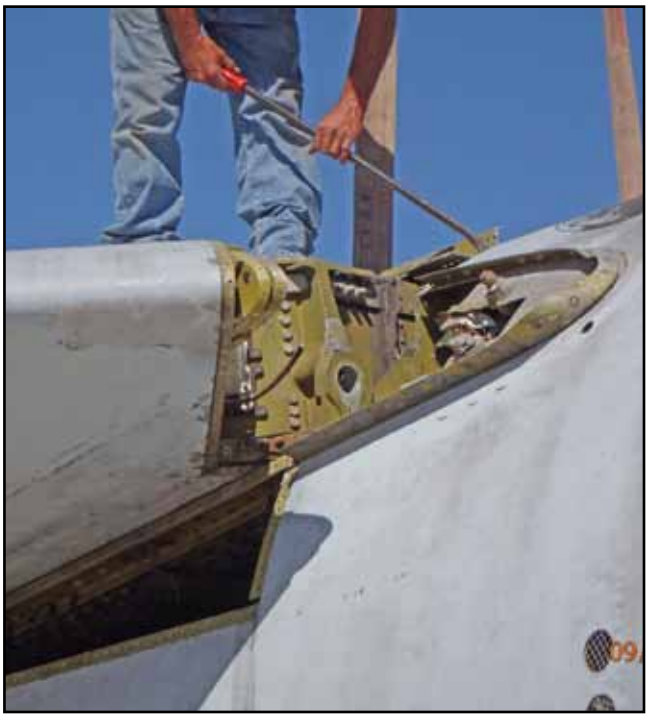
Below, Scott Osler and Bob Robbins look up at the nose markings on XB-47, 46-065, during preparations for the first flight of the Stratjet. These markings will be applied to 46-066 to honor Boeing's contribution to the move and restoration of this valuable airplane. *Photo: Boeing Historical Archives*

Above, A really large crane was used to set the wing on the fuselage. Left, the wing is being lowered so the milk bottle and pop bottle bolts can be inserted to secure it. This was a fairly delicate operation but it came off quite successfully as you can see on the next page. World-Wide Aircraft Recovery did a fantastic job in disassembly, transport and reassembly.
Photos: William Simone

Above left, the glass in the B-47A type nose is being revealed as restoration gets underway. The glass in the XB completely encircled the nose without the framing between the sections. The bombsight and APS-54 structures will also be removed. Below center, 066 is almost completely back together minus landing gear doors. Below left, two shots in the cockpit show the similarities and differences between the XB and the later models. The lower photo shows the ELGE controls. Below right, the final steps in the wing mating process reveal the milk bottle fitting.

Photos: William Simone





Noonday Fix

By Bud Brakowiecki

My love of the B-47 was not one of love at first sight. In fact, the first time I saw the actual airplane Red and I were driving from Sacramento back east on old US 40 (now I-80). We happened to be passing by Lincoln AFB in Nebraska when we saw three B-47s sitting at the end of the runway, engines running, apparently waiting to take off. We pulled off to the side of the road next to a chain link fence, got out, sat on the hood, and popped open a couple of cool ones and waited for whatever was going to happen next.

We had just graduated from basic navigator school, Class '56-07, in Texas where we learned the art of navigation, which included, of course, celestial navigation and neat things like the noonday fix. After basic we were commissioned 2nd Lts. And assigned to Mather AFB in Sacramento for advanced training. I was just about two months from my 21st birthday when I was commissioned and received my navigator wings. At Mather we were introduced to the K-system radar, the bomb-nav system in the B-47, some survival training and other preparation for our assignments to B-47 units. I was assigned to the 340th Wing at Whiteman AFB, MO and Red to Lake Charles AFB in Louisiana. Up to that point our training consisted of ground flight simulators and T-29 "Flying Classrooms." All we knew about the B-47 was from books and a few magazines with pictures; the airplane was relatively new to the SAC inventory.

It was about mid-September, 1956, late afternoon and shirt sleeve weather. We sat there on the hood for awhile, I'm not sure how long, when the first airplane started to move very slowly, turning to the right and lining up on the active runway. It stopped, was motionless for a few seconds and then suddenly there was a deafening roar as the six engines erupted into clouds of heavy black smoke. The ground literally shook as she started forward, slowly at first, then gaining speed. We lost sight of her in the heavy smoke she lay down; then, off in the distance we saw her slowly climbing, as if she were straining for altitude. This scene was repeated as the next two birds took off. There was no wind to speak of and the smoke from the three just lay there, slowly drifting in our direction. It was the first time I smelled burning JP-4 jet aircraft fuel, but certainly not the last over the next 18 years. I stood there, on the hood, motionless for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, I turned to Red and announced that there was no way in hell they were getting me into that thing.

After about ten days leave I arrived at Whiteman AFB, my home for the next four years, it was about the latter part of September 1956. I was immediately taken in by the nature of the area. It was very rural, certainly a lot different than what I was used to in my home town of Cleveland, OH. The base is located about 60 miles east of Kansas City just off US 50. The little town outside the base was Knobnoster, MO, population about 500. They still talked about the bullet holes in the wall outside the bank put there by that famous Missouri son, Jesse James. Before I transferred out from the area in September 1960, I grew to love the people, the area and my "coming-of-age" machine, the B-47.

I signed in at my squadron, the 487th, and settled into the BOQ. The next day I reported to the commander for the official welcome to the unit. I had not met another 2nd Lt. that reported in at the same time before now; he was an ROTC graduate and married. We were both very young and sported the first gold bars the crew members had seen in the unit; something of a rarity, to say the least. I was promoted to 1st Lt. after 18 months which was the standard time for that step up. At my promotions party John Mickelson, a dear friend and mentor, said "congratulations, you're half-way there." How prophetic that proved to be.

The next several weeks were taken up with getting settled into the squadron and becoming familiar with the base while waiting for a class assignment to the Boeing plant at Wichita KS for B-47 ground school. Before going to Wichita I had a couple of flights as the 4th man to "observe" the navigator do the job. I also had a couple of sessions in the K-system flight simulator. Here I also learned that the black smoke I had seen when Red and I were sitting by the runway at Lincoln some months before was caused by a water injection system. Takeoffs at 210,000 lbs. or more were not unusual. On a hot summer day she needed every inch of the 12,000 foot runways. I can now confess that at the time I didn't have a clue and I was somewhat intimidated by the whole thing. That was soon to change.

The instruction at Wichita covered the aircraft operating systems which included the escape systems, that is the ejection seats. The smallness of the crew compartment was amazing given the overall size of the aircraft. To say it was cramped would be an understatement. The only place to stand up straight was next to the pilot's seat and that was quite uncomfortable at best. The only way to the nav seat from the entrance hatch was maybe 2½ to 3 foot wide by 5 to 5½ foot high and I could not get to my seat with a parachute backpack on. It was as if Boeing built this gorgeous airplane but forgot to include room for a crew until the very last and then had to design it in the best they could. I have several thousand hours in another great Boeing product, the BUF (B-52) and while the B-52 six man crew had more room, that crew compartment seems to have been an after-thought also. The B-47 was initially built without the navigator downward ejection system as the system was not ready when the first aircraft entered the inventory. All B-47s were later retrofitted with the nav downward ejection seat system.

The design looks archaic now but in the early 1950s she was the queen of the skies and she ruled, a leader in aviation technology. The B-47 was designed and built less than 50 years after the Wright brothers began the era of powered controlled flight. In those early days the B-47 was the only multi-engine jet in the sky in any numbers, in fact our tankers were prop-driven KC-97s. While at Wichita I purchased one of my prized possessions, although I didn't realize it at the time, a priceless chromed

desk model of the B-47 on an ashtray stand. I was at the Wichita school for about a week as I recall and then returned home to Whiteman.

Flight training in the B-47 was an arduous task because of the small crew compartment and changing seats with the other navigators was quite a task. I don't remember much about my initial flight training other than my instructors, John Mickelson, Bill Tinkcom and Bomber Brown. I do, however, remember my first takeoff in the nav seat. I was 10 minutes behind the aircraft when she started her takeoff roll and that's the closest I got with her over the next 8 hours. I was, as the old expression says," all asshole and elbows" trying to keep up with a 500 mile per hour bird. I should state here that the B-47 navigator performed three functions, navigator, radar operator and bombardier, and as a rule stayed more than a little busy during a flight. Consequently, there was heavy emphasis on pre-flight planning and preparation before takeoff, generally an hour on the ground for every hour in the air. My solo flight check was on 29 April 1957, and I was cleared to go on my own without an instructor next to me or, should I say, behind me. I joined a non-combat ready crew, N-07, and we prepared ourselves for combat-ready status. The crew was upgraded to combat-ready status as R-47 on 5 Sept 1957 after successfully completing a standardization flight check and war plan certification before the Wing Commander.

My four years at Whiteman, between 1956 and 1960, are among the most important years of my life in terms of growth and direction. I had no intention of making career of the military but the people and events of those years made my decision; the memories remain with me to this day. The innocence of the 50's was special for many people and the nation was suddenly thrust into the reality of the "cold war." We "cold war warriors" had to adjust militarily to ever changing global conditions as well as technological advancements at home. The KC-135 jet tanker (military version of Boeing's 707) replaced the prop-driven KC-97, greatly enhancing our global capability. For several years, we planned and used the B-47s as intended, a high altitude bomber. But, with the advent of the supersonic fighters and the Soviet development of their SAMs we developed low altitude flight tactics to counter these changing conditions. To counter the growing ICBM threat we started an alert system whereby we lived in an alert facility, seven day duty, within a hundred feet of our loaded, ready for takeoff aircraft and could have been airborne within minutes. The low altitude flight tactics were the most challenging because we developed them by trial and error. The radar had to be modified for use at altitudes of just 200 to 300 feet above the terrain, and methods for weapon delivery and escape from the blast had to be developed. The challenges were met, "good old American G.I. ingenuity" prevailed.

The most satisfying part of my B-47 experience was as an inflight instructor. I was made an instructor shortly after my crew was upgraded to combat ready and retained that status for the rest of my flying career. I particularly enjoyed a reputation for being able to work with young navigators who were experiencing difficulties in their training. I had an aptitude for working with them. It may have been the challenge in helping each one individually that was so satisfying to me. The experience as an instructor helped in refining my own skills to the point where I felt I had become a part of the airplane, what I called confidence, but others might call "cockiness."

A part of our alert system was deploying to overseas bases, called Reflex, where we pulled our seven day alerts next to our aircraft as we did in the States, but with the obvious advantage that we were much closer to our targets. In 1960, the 340th was assigned to a base in Spain for their alert duty and I was among the first crews to be sent there for the purpose of initiating this process. This was not an easy task as it meant that we had to take, not only our aircraft, but also all the necessary maintenance and support personnel. The folks at the base at Zaragosa did their best to accommodate us and make us at home; it was pleasant duty and a great departure from our regular routine at Whiteman. In early September the crew, pilot John Ludeke, copilot Dick Allee and I, completed our tour and were rotating back to the States. It was to be a flight of three B-47s from Zaragosa AB to Whiteman. Preparation for the flight was as usual except for some expected weather off the east coast of the States that could affect our flight path. Hurricane Donna was building up into quite a weather phenomena, and while we didn't expect any trouble from her, we had to be aware for possible changes in flight.

We arrived at the airplane a couple of hours before takeoff and I noticed maintenance working on the entrance hatch ladder. I didn't think about it at the time. As I started to load my gear into the aircraft, lo and behold, there in the way between the escape hatch and my compartment was a huge wooden crate. It literally filled the space with just enough room for me to crawl over the top of it to get into my seat. Maintenance removed the entrance ladder to lift the crate into the crew compartment. "What the hell is this?" I blurted. John explained that the crate contained a slab of Spanish marble for a friend of his who intended it for a coffee table. We often hauled a lot of this stuff back to the States but normally we put it in the bomb bay which is unpressurized and unheated (it could get to 40 or 50 below at high altitude) sometimes causing marble to crack. Since this friend was a general officer from Offutt AFB, John wanted to make sure it arrived back in the States in one piece. I loaded my gear into the airplane and then met with the pilot, copilot and crew chief outside under the nose to start my pre-flight checks. They were going over the Form 1, aircraft records.

It was at this point that I found out that the nav ejection seat was inoperative. Maintenance disabled it because some tech order had not been complied with and that had to be done back at Whiteman. "John, what the f--- is this?" If anything should happen in flight my only way out was the entrance hatch and that was partially blocked by the crate. John was unaware of the problem with my seat until that moment. He was going to have the maintenance guys remove the crate, which would mean removing the entrance hatch ladder again and most likely resulting in a late takeoff. I told him to leave things alone. The flight

was all high altitude, straight back to Whiteman. My pilot and copilot were the absolute best in SAC, I believed John could fly the crate the airplane came in if we could get an engine on it.

We took off, flew across Spain, Portugal and out across the North Atlantic settling into what appeared to be long, somewhat boring flight. In those days navigation was truly an art. There were no GPS satellites to fix our positions. The radar was our primary navigation aid, however it was not much good out over the North Atlantic. We had to rely on celestial navigation, that, of course, meant sunlines along with basic dead reckoning: time, speed, distance. Since the sunline only provided only one line of position there was an amount of adjustment and wagging. There were vessels out in the North Atlantic called "ocean stations" that could get a fix on an aircraft but, for some reason, I can't remember why, they were unable to give us a fix. Not to worry, we were coming up on noon, that time when the sun was directly overhead and I could get a noonday fix, something I learned in basic navigation school about 4 ½ years earlier but never had an opportunity to try until now. Out came my inflight reference manual, a quick review and I was raring to go, the "art" of navigation. The idea was to take three sun shots, first 20 minutes before, second as the sun was directly overhead and third 20 minutes after. The first was advanced to the middle shot, the third retarded to the middle shot and where the three intersected was the position of the aircraft. Simple?? But it worked.

Some hours later we approached the East Coast and the point where we were to rendezvous with our tankers, three KC-135s out of a base in South Carolina. I started looking for their signal on the radar scope and Dick started calling on the pre-arranged radio frequency—nothing. We had been heading west into a headwind and fuel was running low. I stared at the scope while Dick and I tried to raise the tankers on the radio—nothing. I started to sweat bullets; the string got tight. I could see it now, three B-47s lost at sea because the navigator screwed up. I remember the pilots talking about dropping the wing tanks and heading for an alternate if we couldn't refuel, but where? The next thing of which I was aware was the navigators in the two wingmen arguing, over the radio, about where we were. I told John to tell the other two to shut the hell up and gave them my coordinates for our position. After what seemed like hours and a whole lot of wrenching and sweating, I finally saw the tanker's signal on my scope and course corrected to rendezvous with them. The refueling proceeded without further incident.

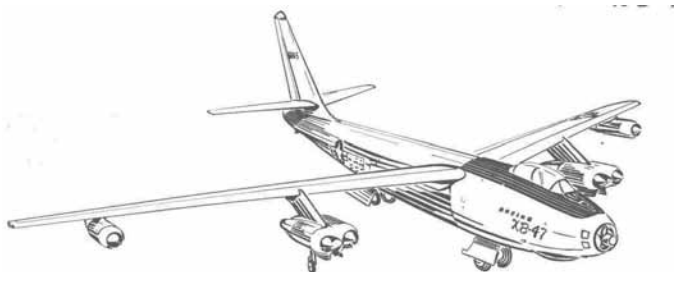
Hurricane Donna had closed down the East Coast bases, she was apparently a lot stronger than originally anticipated, which grounded the tankers out of South Carolina. This necessitated three tankers coming out of Plattsburg AFB in upper New York, which was considerably further away, and the reason for the late rendezvous and hook-up. The rest of the flight into Whiteman was routine. My flight suit had dried out and I was my calm "there was nothing to it" self as we deplaned and headed for debriefing. The next day I reviewed the flight with our squadron navigator and he gave all my charts and paperwork (computations) to two young navigators in the squadron to check over my work and replot the over-water portion of the flight. A couple of days later I was told by one of the young navs that they had, after re-computing everything, come within less than 4 miles of the position I had computed and plotted in flight. They, of course, had all day, a large library table and hot coffee; I was in an airplane going 500+ mph, a work table 12"x30 " and cold coffee. Just another day at the office! That was my last flight in a B-47 and the one I remember most over the years.

I retired after 21 years with my beloved Air Force and had a second career, but those early Whiteman years are a large part of me. I recall them often. In 1979, I ran into an old friend from those years and was told that several people from the 340th BW had gotten together for a reunion and that year they were gathering in San Antonio, TX. We've been meeting every two years since. I cannot express how great those gatherings are: the camaraderie, the memories relived and the war stories abound. It was at our reunion in Las Vegas, Sept 9-13, 2001, that I received one of the most pleasant surprises of my life. A dear friend, a B-47 pilot from those days, handed me a business card with a picture of a B-47 on it. We talked about the picture, if he still had the negative, the details of the flight, etc., when suddenly our attention was overshadowed by the events of 9/11. We, like millions of other Americans, spent the next two days in shock and disbelief, glued to the TVs in the hotel as event unfolded, each of us wanting to get back into uniform, ready to serve our country.

The next reunion was held at Kansas City in Sept 2003. David and I had been emailing each other periodically with the subject of the picture again coming up. He was unable to find the negatives but was able to scan the original photo into his computer. The 2003 gathering, like the previous ones, was great, the highlight of which was a trip to and tour of Whiteman AFB, now home to the B-2 bomber. We talked more of the picture, I became more convinced it was my last flight. As soon as I returned home in Sacramento I checked my old flight records (Form 5) and there it was, "9 Sep 60, 11.5 hours." I immediately emailed the info to David and, bingo, his records agreed. It is indeed a picture of my airplane, my last flight in that grand machine, the B-47. Thrilled? Beyond expression! Grateful? Eternally! Thankful? To God and to my country!

GOD BLESS AMERICA!!!

Bud Brakowiecki is a member of the The Board of Governors of our Association. See the next page for the photo he mentions at the end of his article.tt



Bud Brakowiecki's airplane on his last flight in a B-47, enroute from Zaragosa to Whiteman AFB. This airplane, 51-2249, was manufactured by Douglas at Tulsa in June of 1953 and first assigned to the 91st SRW at Lockbourne AFB. It was transferred to the 26th SRW as a YRB-47B on 12 February 1954. On 12 April 1954, the Stratojet was transferred to the 3340th BW (modified back to a B-47B) and remained with that unit until it was sent to OCAMA at Tinker AFB and scrapped on 9 March 1961. *Photo: via Bud Brakowiecki*

The Reluctant Mechanic

by Wilton Strickland

I was an A/2C (E-3) B-47E maintenance crew chief in the 98th Bomb Wing at Lincoln AFB, NE, from Oct '57 to Mar '60, when I left to attend OCS

During the Lebanon crisis in '58, my T/Sgt assistant (retraining from some other career field) and I were on alert, living in a mobile home unit near the aircraft, which was loaded with a nuclear weapon ready to launch at a moment's notice and strike a target in the Soviet Union. We had an alert exercise to start engines up to ready-to-taxi. While starting engine one (left outboard), I noticed that the flight crew had left their brand new '58 Chevrolet 4-door sedan "alert vehicle" (a civilian rental) parked much too closely behind engines 2 & 3 pod. I was on intercom with the flight crew and standing by each engine as fire guard during the engine start. As engines 2 and 3 began to rev, I was yelling to my assistant to, "Move the car, move the car!" Then I stupidly ran across directly (up close) behind engines 2 & 3, planning to go under the aircraft to the other side; I still vividly remember the sight of the two circles of flame around the turbines and the heat on the left side of my face; I immediately went tumbling across the ramp, but was able to recover enough to retrieve my headset and make it to the right side of the aircraft before engine start was complete. I had skinned knees and elbows, torn pants and hurt pride, plus a good lesson learned. 'Lucky the engines were coming up to only idle - 22 percent RPM.

We had just put the airplane on alert that morning, but about thirty minutes or so after the alert exercise, the flight crew came back to the airplane and told me they were moving back to the airplane they had left earlier that morning and started unloading their equipment. When the navigator and co-pilot began to unload the Emergency War Order (EWO) box, the navigator's padlock would not unlock! He soon became somewhat frantic and asked me to do whatever necessary to help him free the box from the airplane. I don't remember exactly how I finally got it free, though I vaguely remember using a hammer and a chisel. 'Don't remember if I broke the bracket to which the box was attached or was able to unbolt it, but I finally freed the box.

About six years later, I was a first lieutenant navigator on a B-52G combat-ready crew at Robins AFB, GA. After landing at Robins at the end of a 24-hour, Chrome Dome airborne alert

***Reluctant**...continued on page 14*

Gospel*....continued from page 1*

Within 3 days of the North Korean incursion into South Korea, SAC B-29s were bombing the north. Yet, Cold War politics precluded bombing outside of North Korea and Gen MacArthur's concept of airpower was to treat it as airborne artillery. Apart from the ever present threat that we might "go nuke" Korea was really no test of the gospel of airpower.

The Cold War with its philosophy of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) brought the nuclear element of airpower forward. For nearly 40 years, the Soviet's knowledge of the nuclear threat SAC presented, and the professionalism that made that threat viable kept the peace.

As we go forward into the era of terrorism and tactical "brushfire" wars, the efficacy of the Gospel of Airpower remains to be proven. We who provided the airpower during the Cold War will be watching closely to see where strategic airpower goes next.

***Reluctant*...continued from page 13**

mission, MY padlock securing the EWO box would not release! "Everybody," including crew commander, squadron ops officer and CO, wing DO and CO, each in turn accused me of "forgetting" the combination. I told each of them, as each tried the combination for himself, "No, I haven't forgotten it! How could I forget it? It's my birth date!? It hasn't changed, and I haven't changed it in the lock, which has been working fine for the nearly two years I've had it!" ('Same number I used in all four of those locks I used during 13 years as a B-52 air crewman - it still hasn't changed.)

A locksmith also came and could not release the lock. We finally cut the lock or the cable with bolt cutters - 'don't remember which. So those locks DID fail occasionally. I often wondered what if that were to happen in flight on an actual mission with strike orders (GO code). Of course, the crew wouldn't know it's a GO code if they couldn't get in the box, would they?

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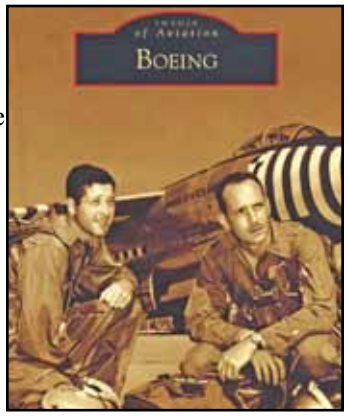
Publications



The latest book from John Fredrickson features our favorite airplane on the cover. The small hardcover book is a really fine pictorial history of the Boeing Company. The 127 pages are filled with well chosen images from the beginning of the company up to the most current production at Charleston SC. Amazon has it for $16.77.

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B-47B 51-2288, is seen here on the ramp at an unknown base. It was built by Douglas and delivered to the 320th BW at March AFB on 30 Sept 1953. On 22 Nov 1955 it went to the 19th BW at Pinecastle AFB. The 379th BW at Homestead acquired it on 5 Aug 1958 and kept it until it was flown to Davis-Monthan for reclamation on 15 Nov 1960. *Photo: Habermehl Collection*

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