

The Stratojet Newsletter

April/July 2011 Volume 35

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

OPEN SESAME!

by James D. Hooppaw

How many of you remember how to get into the B-47E? It was really simple if everything worked as designed. However, there could be difficulties. These only seemed to occur when responding to an exercise while on alert. Just to refresh your memory, according to the Tech Order 1B-47E-1, pages 1-114-115, the proper information and procedure was as follows:

EXTERNAL ENTRANCE DOOR

The external or main entrance door is located on the forward left side of the airplane below the cockpit. A door handle is located at the lower right corner of the door and the door is opened by grasping and pulling the handle. A similar interconnecting handle is located on the inside of the door and is operated in a like manner. In case of emergency bailout, the door is automatically jettisoned into the airstream when the emergency bailout handle is pulled.

PRESSURE DOOR

The pressure door, which provides entrance to the pressurized compartment, is located within the airplane fuselage in alignment with the main entrance door. The door is of the sliding type and is opened from the outside by pushing in on the external pressure door release handle located above the pressure door. An interconnected internal



This staged shot of a B-47 crew scrambling to the cockpit shows the features of the door and ladder described by Hooppaw. Note the knob below the lowest rung.

Photo: USAF

handle is located on the inside of the pressurized compartment above the door. The pressure door is closed from inside the airplane by pulling down the internal pressure door release handle and sliding the door to the closed position until

Open...continued on p. 3

Roll Call of Honor

Robert Covington, Goshen IN, died 5 Jul 2010.

SSgt. Caesar Dias, Vacaville CA, passed away 16 June 2011. He served in 443rd Bomb Squadron, 320th BW at March AFB, 1952-56; Crew Chief on B-29 and B-47.

James A. Fraser, Sedona AZ, passed away 20 August 2010. Jim was a Boeing Test Pilot and flew B-17s, B-29s, B-50s, and Stratocruisers as well as the XB-47.

Roger B. Pewsey, Kingman AZ, passed away 28 September, 2010.

Kenneth R. Waggoner, Charleston SC, died 23 Jan 2011.

B-47 Stratojet Association Officers

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

Vice-President - David Hitchcock
2016 Joann, Wichita, KS 67203
316-942-6607
akaplanenut@cox.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
3661 Packard Rd., Niagra Falls, NY 14303
716-799-7074
b47assn@hotmail.com

Website Editor - James Diamond
898 NE Coronado St., Lee's Summit, MO 64086-5529
816-524-9562
imjackd@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor - Mike Habermehl
P. O. Box 1144, Brenham, TX 77834-1144
979-836-9427
cmhs@sbcglobal.net

Board of Governors

Don Cassiday
1402 West Downer, Aurora, IL 60506
630-859-1922
colcass@sbcglobal.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
andrew.labosky@sbcglobal.net

Ken Tollin
2742 Perryville, Odessa, TX 79761
432-362-1797
krtollin@grandecom.net

John H. Daly III
391 Riverwoods Drive, Flushing, MI 48433
810-487-1985
JohnHDalyIII@aol.com

Mark Natola
23 Oak Ridge Road W. Lebanon, NH 03784
603-643-3399
mark.natola@hitchcock.org

Special Agent Gibbs and the B-47

If you are a fan of the TV show, *NCIS*, you might check the re-runs on cable. Last year, there was an episode that concerned a lost nuke over the Mediterranean and it featured some footage of a B-47. It first aired on 9 November 2010 and the title was "Broken Arrow" (Season 8, Episode 7).



Important Reminders

- **Pay your dues for 2011** (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.

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. 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.

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

Open...continued from p. 1

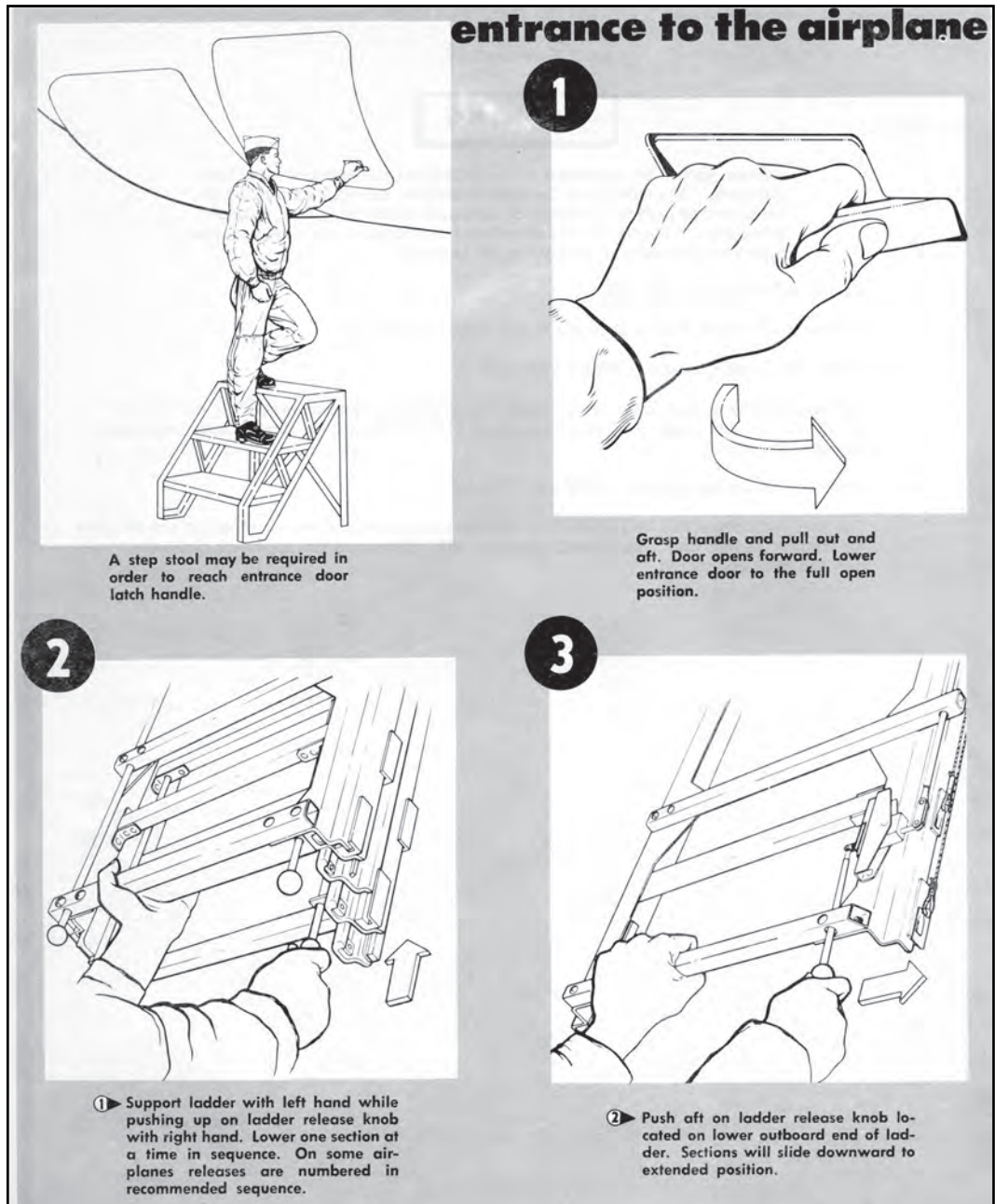
the latches engage. The door handle is then raised, lifting the door into the sealed position. From inside the pressurized compartment, the pressure door is opened by pulling down the internal pressure door handle and allowing it to slide down and open.

ENTRANCE LADDER

The airplane is provided with a five-section interlocking ladder to facilitate normal entrance and exit. The ladder is installed in the main entranceway and folds up to stow within the fuselage. Under emergency bailout conditions, the ladder is jettisoned into the airstream upon activation of the bailout spoiler mechanism and the entranceway is left clear of dangerous obstructions.

The four bottom sections of the ladder are extended by operating the individual push to release latch knobs operated at the base of each section. The sections latch automatically as they are extended or retracted.

The ladder is extended from outside the airplane by operating the push knob located on the lower outboard end of the ladder. When the knob is pushed aft, the ladder sections slide downward, each section unlatching the succeeding section as it extends. From inside the airplane, operating the push knob on the end of the ladder unlatches the other sections in succession as it slides downward to the extended position. The ladder is retracted by grasping the bottom section and pushing upward. As the sections slide upward to the stowed position inside the fuselage, they automatically latch together.



Having covered all of that, everyone should know how to get into or out of the aircraft. Under normal conditions such as a training flight, when the crew arrived at the aircraft, the crew chief would have completed his preflight and the entrance hatch would be open and the ladder extended. If the crew arrived first, such as during an exercise when the aircraft would be buttoned up for security purposes, the crew would have to open the hatch and extend the ladder. In some cases, particularly in hot and humid climates the hatch might be open and the ladder extended.

Open...continued on p. 4

4 The Stratojet Newsletter

Open...continued from p. 3

The aircraft, when static, sat with a two to three degree incline. In other words, if a line was drawn horizontal to the ground from the tail to the nose, the nose of the aircraft would be two to three degrees higher than the tail. This was supposed to aid in getting the beast airborne. This additional height made it difficult for those who were height challenged, you know, short people. For example, I had an AC who was about five foot six inches tall and with great effort could jump and grab the hatch release and then with an additional jump release the ladder.

If the aircraft had a light fuel load, the ladder release knob would be difficult to reach and thus make extending the ladder difficult. The extensions of the ladder were held in place by bungee cords. This made releasing the ladder even more adventurous. If the bungee cords had not been tightened properly one ran the risk of the ladder contacting the top of one's head or shoulder depending upon said person's height. If the bungee cords were too tight the ladder would not fully extend and that first step would result in a sudden drop as the weight of the person

extended it to full extension. Therefore, it behooved one to check before beginning the climb into the cockpit. Additionally, if when closing the bird, one did not push upward properly or hard enough on the ladder or pushed up with the release knob, it was not uncommon for the ladder to return to its extended position usually contacting the person who had pushed it up.

All of that was in normal conditions when the crew had plenty of time and could observe any discrepancies, although there was always the times one forgot.

Alert exercises could be fun. Just getting into the aircraft could be hazardous. The crew was always in a rush, for it took forever, or at least it seemed like it, to get all six engines started and in idle. But that is another story.

Under ideal conditions the crew chief would have arrived at the aircraft, ensured the hatch was open with the ladder extended and the power cart was operating. The crew would arrive and with reckless abandon the pilot team would attack the ladder to get started on the process of starting the engines. This is where the fun began. Over

Open...continued on p. 5



The very first Stratojet, XB-47, 46-065, had a rope ladder (note it dangling behind test pilot Bob Robbins). It was used mainly for egress. The later telescoping ladder was not yet perfected.



A step ladder was used for the first flight of the XB-47. Here is Robbins as he exits the cockpit after the landing.

Photos: via Robert M. Robbins

Open...continued from p. 4

anxious pilots have taken a leap for the ladder and missed the steps with both hand and foot, flying through the openings, ending with a painful collision against the ladder. This did not occur that often.

The worst and most painful experience is what this is all about. It has happened to everyone at some time. Alert exercises are the worst. The crew arrives at the aircraft to find the hatch open and ladder extended. However, the crew chief has adjusted the tension on the bungee cords so tight that the rungs in the sections do not overlap, but have a few inches between them. The pilot lunges for the ladder with arms and legs extended. With luck he hits it just right and only experiences a surprising drop of a few inches and can continue up the ladder. However, if his trajectory is faulty and his hand(s) go through the space between the rungs to grasp one, as his feet hit the lower rung, the weight on the lower rung drops the ladder and the hand(s) are caught between a lower and upper rung. This is painful. If one steps off of the ladder he is left hanging. His options are to step off and release the pressure on the hands and thus drop to the ground or try to get a better hold that will not capture his hands, or try to pull his hands free while staying on the ladder (very difficult and hard on the skin and knuckles). The time involved in making the decision seems to be measured in hours while in reality it is only seconds. All the while, the other pilot is at the bottom of the ladder encouraging the one on the ladder to "step on it!"

*It's great to have another Jim Hooppaw article. His last piece, "Busier Than A One-Legged Man At Butt Kicking or When You Get Time, CP, Get Me A Cup Of Coffee" was highly acclimated. Jim flew B-47s and B-52s and has written **Where The Buf Fellows Roamed, Burns Flat Motoring and Yachting Societe', and Tall Tail Tales.** He can be contacted at av8r13@earthlink.net. This article appears with his permission.*



Up the ladder!

Photo: USAF

Wipe The Windshield, Please

A route had been set up where a B-47 would depart Plattsburg, fly out over the east coast, drop down low level and proceed west to the the Watertown NY area for a practice low level bomb run (I suspect the aircraft that hit Mount Mercy may have been on this route as we heard a rumor that they were low level and 40 miles off course.)

One day we were low level on this route, over the water and headed west. I was lying in the floor on the pressure door, half asleep, when the A/C said "Chief, I'm getting salt spray on the windshield, how about wiping it off?" I told him if he would open the canopy I would reach out and clean the windshield. His reply was "Okay, if you won't clean it I will have the navigator do it." I thought to my self "oh sure."

The A/C said to the navigator, "a little water please Nav." The navigator opened his overhead sextant port, took the water bottle, opened the spout and stuck it into the port. I watched as water was sucked from the water bottle and hit the windshield. The A/C reached over to the left, turned on the windshield wiper, looked down at me and gave me a big smile.

Carl Midkiff

Hurry, Hurry!!!

In the late 1950s, the 320th and 22nd Bomb Wings from March AFB were involved in tests to determine if B-47s on alert could be launched more quickly by taking-off side-by-side on the runway. Larry First's airplane (he was Assistant Crew Chief) was one of the B-47Es involved. Here are his recollections of that test. ed.

If I remember correctly we were at Edwards AFB about two weeks and launched the aircraft on a daily basis. The aircraft were configured similar to what they would be when on alert as to fuel load, bomb weight, ATO rack and bottles. Once the takeoff was made the mission was over for that day. We crew chiefs would stand-by until the aircraft had burned off enough fuel to be light enough to land. When they were back on the ground, refueled and configured for the next mission we were done for the day. Great duty for those two weeks,!

The two aircraft in the takeoff picture are 52-520 (lead) of the 320th BW and 52-3356 of the 22nd BW. I'm not positive that the year is correct on these serial numbers but the last four digits are right. 2520 was always the fastest on takeoff. The engines must have been trimmed perfectly. The flight crews called 520 "Silky Sullivan," a famous

racehorse in that era. The number of the other 320th BW aircraft was 52-2307 and I don't remember the other 22nd aircraft.

The other two B-47s that participated in this project were assigned to Edwards AFB. I believe they were successful just once with all six aircraft going two abreast but I'm not 100% sure, it's been a long time ago. At any rate it was a sight to remember and seen by few.

I loved the B-47, my favorite aircraft to work and fly on (not because of the comfortable 4th man seat!) during my Air Force career. What a privilege to be a crew chief on this beautiful machine. I should have paid them!

MSGT Larry D. First, USAF, RET.



Boeing Wichita's postmark during the mid-1950s



*B-47Es, 52-3356 of the 22nd BW and 52-520 of the 320th on takeoff roll during **Project Hurry Hurry** at Edwards AFB. Every aircraft behind these two would have quite a problem with visibility and this procedure was never adopted for that very reason.*

Photo: Air Force Test Flight Center via Larry First



Project officers and crews of the B-47s participating in Project **Hurry Hurry**. Kneeling and 6th over from the left is A/IC Larry First. To his right is SSGT Jack McDowell. To his left, SSGT Don Goodwin, A/IC John Morris, TSGT John Svoda. 52-3356 was delivered to the 301st BW on 19 April 1955 and transferred to the 22nd BW on 21 March 1957. On 6 June 1960 it was assigned to the 4347th CCTW at McConnell and on 6 June 1961 she was delivered to storage at Davis-Monthan AFB.

Photo: Air Force Flight Test Center via Larry First



Select Crew (S-34) from the 96th Bomb Wing, Dyess TX. Left to right, Maj. Robert C. Conway, A/C, Capt. Joe Walsh, Co-pilot, and Maj. Paul R. Lippincott, Sr., Bomb/Nav.

Photo: via Paul R. Lippincott. Sr.

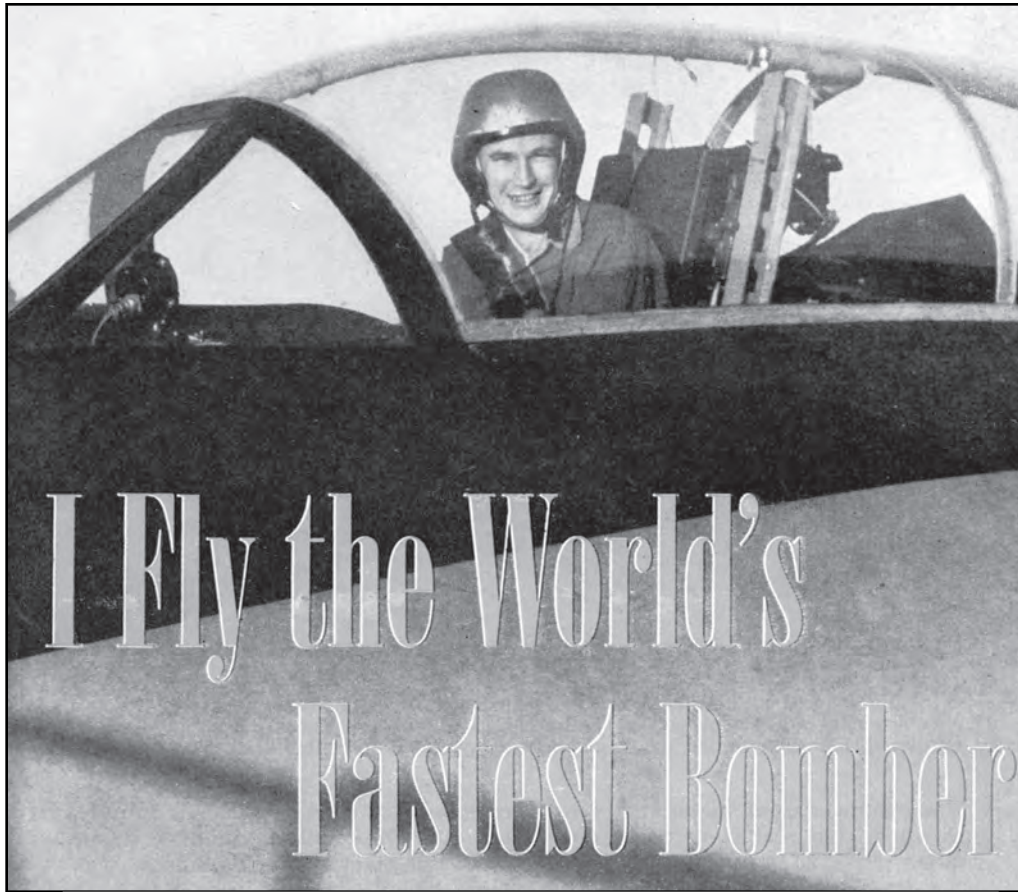
Jim Fraser, 1919-2010



Jim Fraser went to work for Boeing in Seattle in 1942 after graduating from the University of Washington. He was hired as an engineer to record data on B-17 test flights but he was soon given test pilot duties on the B-17 as well as the new B-29.

When the B-47 was in flight test he was assigned as third pilot on the project as he had logged some jet time in the P-59 when he attended a flight test performance school at Wright Field. He did not expect to fly the new airplane unless it went into production, but 2nd pilot Scott Osler caught a severe cold a few weeks after the first flight, and Jim flew the second seat for the first time. He later said that he got \$100 "premium pay" for the one hour flight and it was the only hazard pay he ever received in eight years of flight test work.

After Bob Robbins (the XB-47 pilot) left for Wichita, Jim moved into the second seat on a regular basis. In an early draft of his autobiography, he writes of those flight test days.



*A young Jim Fraser featured in the November, 1949 issue of **Popular Science**.*

an instrumented P-80 jet fighter was flown in by a rather self-assured Air Force Lieutenant to pace the B-47 in flight and enable us to calibrate the airspeed system by getting read-outs from both airplanes at various points in the full range of speeds. We were cruising side-by-side at 10,000 feet, as I recall, when I got on the radio and asked which end of the range he would like to start on. We agreed on the high end and Scott pushed the throttles to full power. I got ready with the data board and looked over toward the P-80 as the speed stabilized. It was gone. From a mile back, the Air Force Lieutenant suggested that maybe we ought to get the low end of the range first and work up. It was the first indication to the lower echelons of the military that there was a bomber around in the "600 mph class."

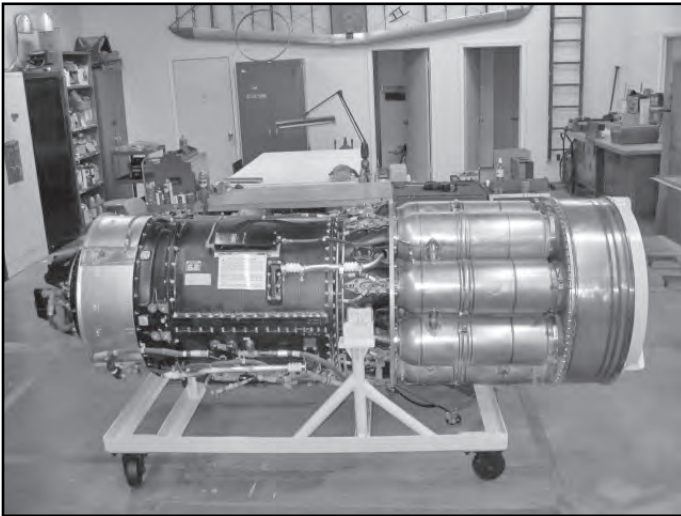
That same year I was in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on personal business when I was asked to give a talk to the officers of a B-29 Bombardment Wing stationed there. This elite group, flying "atomic bombers" in the atomic age hooted with disbelief when I told them the above story. It's no wonder we still had cavalry in WWII.

Jim was in the backseat of the XB-47 the day the canopy latch came loose and killed pilot Scott Osler. He managed to get in the front seat and land the airplane but it would be his last flight in the B-47. He and Osler had been very close and the loss took a toll. He was also unhappy with the way he handled the emergency. The program was suspended for an investigation and eventually when it resumed, the tests were moved to Wichita. Jim flew a few more projects involving high altitude tests in the B-50 and civilian Stratocruiser. He then took an administrative position with Boeing.

We remember Jim because of his early involvement with the B-47 and because he was a supporter of the B-47 Stratojet Association from the very beginning. He was at the very first reunion, was a speaker at the second one, and sat on a panel of Stratojet pioneers when we met in Seattle in 2002. He and Susan last attended the reunion in Wichita. Unfortunately, health issues prevented them from making the one in 2008, and their smiling faces (and Jim's big white hat) were sorely missed.

Jim passed away on August 20, 2010, at 91 years of age. He is survived by his wife, Susan, children Scott, Stuart, and Cindy, and six grandchildren.

We tested systems, parachute braking, jato takeoff, etc. One day



The finished product after Pete Troesch's crew finished their work on the J-47. It is now on display. Photo: Pete Troesch

Chanute Air Museum XB-47 Progress Report

(January 1, 2011 - April 30, 2011)

During the months of January, February and March, 2011 the J-47-GE-11 turbojet engine was moved from the Chanute Air Museum hangar to the museum's adjoining workshop. This model of engine was used on the B-47. Cleaning and polishing of the engine and scrapping, wire brushing and painting of the 4-wheel engine dolly were performed. Upon completion the engine was returned to the hangar for display and viewing by museum visitors on March 16,, 2011.

Approximately 110 hours of work were performed on the engine by Rol Barger, Bob Benuska, Richard Redden, Don Ross, Bob Surber and Pete Troesch.

The "AFTER" photo of the engine is included illustrating the work performed and the facility in which we worked.

Work performed on the XB-47 (46-0066)

March 16th - Secured metal floor panels in the cockpit with approximately 30 screws located behind the copilot's station. Began scrapping several coats of black paint from the landing lights plastic lens.

March 23rd - Loosened bolts on the copilot's seat and continued scrapping paint off the landing lights lens.

March 30th - Continued scrapping paint from the landing lights lens.

April 6th - Unbolted copilot's seat from the mounting frame and up-righted and correctly positioned the seat. For some unknown reason the seat had been placed in the XB-47 in an up-side-down position. Purchased repair kit for cleaning and polishing the landing lights plastic lens.

April 14th - Began washing of the a/c nose and continued scrapping paint from the landing lights lens. This work was performed with the help provided by 10 high school age students from the Lincoln Challenge Academy who were accumulating community service work hours.

April 21st - An inspection of the cockpit following a two day period of rain approximating 1 1/2" - 2" revealed no leaks or pools of rainwater. Attempted to jack up the left outrigger landing gear without success. Loosened and retightened 28 nuts and bolts on both outrigger landing gear rims. Provided information about the B-47 and its' role during the Cold War to 5 foreign exchange students from Brazil. Began repair of the landing lights plastic lens using a Headlights Lens Repair Kit.

April 27th - Raised the LH outrigger with a 35 ton jack and rotated the wheel 360 degrees. The outrigger was then lowered. Assessed the RH outrigger to determine if the LH outrigger jack point bracket could be installed to replace the existing severely damaged RH bracket. This seems possible . When the bracket is installed and the RH outrigger is successfully raised, we will then consider purchasing two non-flyable tires and tubes available to us at an estimated cost of \$250 plus shipping cost from Sexton Tires in Loganville, GA.

Approximately 85 hours of work were performed on the XB-47 by the Lincoln Challenge Academy students, Rol Barger, Bob Benuska, Richard Redden, Don Ross, Bob Surber and Pete Troesch.

Pete Troesch



Bookshelf



Member and former Newsletter editor Mark Natola has published a fine new softcover book filled with photographs of our favorite airplane. **Boeing B-47 Stratojet, A Photographic**

History is a very good complement for previously published Stratojet histories. It is a wide format book with most photos printed full-page. You will find a rather complete pictorial record of the aircraft and you just might see a shot or two of a version or modified bird that you never knew existed. After publishing his previous book, **Boeing B-47 Stratojet, True Stories Of The Cold War In The Air**, Mark found that he had many wonderful photos that could not be accommodated in that work. We are indebted to him for putting them into print and allowing all of us to enjoy these wonderful views. The book, published by Schiffer Military History, is 128 pages in length and is available from amazon.com for \$19.99.

Two novels are available that you might find interesting.

Bring Back The B-47

by Lock.S is about a retired navigator's quest to resurrect and modify the B-47. He finds that they've all been scrapped and so moves on to a proposal for remotely piloted



fighters to compete with the F-22. Evidently, most of the intrigue here is in his dealings with the Pentagon and Congress. The book is

Bookshelf...continued on p. 11

Supply Room

Items are available from George Brierley, 3661 Packard Rd., Niagara Falls, NY 14303. Make checks payable to the B-47 Stratojet Association. **Please ADD \$3.00 for shipping and handling**



Association Pin - \$10.00



2008 Reunion Coin
\$10.00



Association Coaster (2) - \$2.50



Mug - Association "Horn Button" emblem on reverse side - \$10.00



Association Mouse Pad
\$3.00



Cap (Blue)
\$10.00

Tote Bag from 2008 Reunion at Marietta (side pockets, carrying strap, Association logo)



\$10.00

Association T-Shirt With Pocket - \$17.00 (Size -M,L,XL)



Shirt Front



Shirt Back

Bookshelf...continued from p. 10

published by iUniverse and is available from amazon.com for \$19.95. The second novel, **Broken Arrow** from Book-Print Publishing, is described as “historic fiction” and is based on the incident where Major Howard Richardson and his crew jettisoned a nuclear weapon near Savannah GA. That story has been told in this newsletter as well as other publications. This is a detailed re-telling of the story and it has been researched very well. The account of

the planning and execution of the USCM is very accurate and the story is a testimony to the ruggedness of the B-47 as well as the competency of the crew. There are 16 illustrations to accompany the 144 pages of text, but very little room is given to the sensationalism that has accompanied several subsequent investigations of the incident (the latest about seven years ago). The book was written by Charles D. Richardson and can be ordered from amazon.com for \$18.72.

Application For Membership - The B-47 Stratojet Association

New Member
 Renewal (Fill in Name only, and address data if changed)

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

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

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



An Unusual view of an early Stratojet. Note there are no wing tanks or tail turret. Photo: USAF

Next Reunion ~ 1-3 November 2012 ~ Tucson AZ