



# The Stratojet Newsletter

April 2014 Volume 41

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



*A rare color photo of a TB-47B taking on fuel from a KC-97. Daylight made it easier but it was never easy and at night it was a whole different story (see article below).*

*Photo: USAF*

## Fueling Fumble

*This article first appeared in the November 2013 issue of the **Military Officer**, the monthly magazine of the Military Officers Association of America. It is printed here with permission.*

When I arrived at the 43rd Bomb Wing at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, in the summer of 1954, the wing had just received its full complement of 45 shiny, new six-jet engine B-47 bombers. The airplane could fly at 500 mph at 40,000 feet for about seven hours without refueling. However, the Strategic Air Command's (SAC) war plan directed toward the old Soviet Union often called for missions of nine hours or more. So we practiced midair refueling on almost every mission with SAC's slow KC-97 propeller-driven tankers.

The stark difference in performance between the two airplanes posed problems. The 500 mph bomber normally would stall at airspeeds below 220 mph, while on a good day the KC-97 tanker could do maybe 240 mph. The solution to the problem: After we hooked up and started transferring fuel, the tanker would start a slow descent to gain airspeed while the jet bomber literally hung in the air near stall speed during the risky maneuver.



*Fueling...continued on page 4*

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## ***Roll Call Of Honor***

*Members no longer with us. We honor their service to this nation and extend our sympathies to their families.*

George F. Brierley, Niagra Falls NY, 2/24/14

Kenneth A. Caldwell, Jsackson TN, 2/5/14

William J. Daniels, Pineville LA, 2/23/14

David B. Dexter, Riverside OH, 1/17/13

Elden C. Fick, Hurst TX, 1/14/14

Ronald R. Grundon, Sedalia MO, 11/16/13

William F. Hanley, Niceville FL, 11/11/13

Harry A. Kickery, Rapid City SD, 4/30/14

William E. Krueger, Boise ID, 2/24/14

Paul R. Lippincott, Panama City FL, 4/20/14

Isaac Greg Norman, Winchester VA, 5/19/14

George Trifonoff, Wichita KS, 05/21/14

## ***Important Reminders***

- **Pay your dues for 2014** (the number on your mailing label indicates the year through which you are paid-up).
- Send dues to address at bottom of page 11.
- Send address, email, & telephone corrections to Dick Curran.
- Send newsletter articles, photos, news about members, etc. to Mike Habermehl, Editor.
- Plan on attending the Reunion in Fort Walton Beach FL, 30 October - 2 November 2014.

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.

# ***B-47 Stratojet Reunion - 2014 - Ft. Walton Beach FL***

## ***30 October-2 November***

***See Pages 6-7***

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### ***George Brierly ~ 1936-2014***

George Brierly, who served as our BX Officer for fifteen years passed away on Sunday, 23 February 2014, in Niagara Falls NY.

George was honorably discharged from the USAF in 1962 and remembered his B-47 days fondly. He was an early member of the B-47 Stratojet Association and with his wife, Shirley, manned the BX booth at many of our reunions. If you ever ordered items from the Association it was George who took your money, packaged your item and sent it on its way. He took his duties seriously and wanted your affiliation to be shown by attractive, quality items. We will never know how Shirley put up with storing the inventory all these years or how they managed to transport them to the reunions.

After his Air Force days, George worked in security and law enforcement for the next 36 years. He retired as Chief of the Caledonia County Sheriff's Department in Hardwick VT in 1997. In 1998 he served as Head of Security at Lyndon State College. After retirement, George and Shirley moved to Florida where he served as Commander of the 125th Legion in St. Petersburg.



George left behind 8 children, 18 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. He made many unique gifts for them over the years in his life-long hobby of woodworking.

George had a great sense of humor and we will always remember the great stories he told of his peace officer days. He will be missed and we are grateful for his service to his country and to the Association.



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### ***2014 B-52 Stratofortress Reunion August 14-17***

The B-52 Stratofortress Association will meet in Colorado Springs for the 2014 reunion celebration. The Colorado Marriot is the host hotel and reservations must be made no later than July 14, 2014 (\$99/night plus tax for reunion attendees). Call 800-932-2151 for reservations. Full registration fee is \$157 with optional tours (additional fees) to the AF Academy, Ghost Town Museum, Garden of the Gods, Rock Ledge Ranch, National Museum of WWII Aviation or Manitou Springs Shopping. A Sunday optional tour will be offered to the Wings Over The Rockies Museum and Molly Browns House. One unique dining experience will be a buffet available at Solo's

Airplane Restaurant which features a dining area in a KC-97G tanker! It is an unusual environment but the service and food are both good. The old tanker is 53-283 and last served with the Texas Air Guard. Further information and/or a registration form is available from The Reunion Brat (360-663-2521) or our website ([www.b-47.com](http://www.b-47.com)).

*Fueling...*continued from page 1

Our 4 AM takeoff on a cold November morning was uneventful. Being a new combat-ready crew with a total of maybe 200 flying hours in the new airplane among the three of us, we felt elated just to be safely in the air. We quickly climbed to an altitude of 15,000 feet and made radio contact with the airborne tanker. As the navigator/bombardier, I homed in on the tanker's electronic radar beacon and provided the aircraft commander (AC) with direction, distance, and time to the tanker.

As we closed, the AC said he spotted the tanker's lights and made an abrupt 40-degree course correction to close visually. I advised that I had the tanker straight ahead at 10 miles. The AC ignored my directions, saying he had the lights of the tanker in sight and was closing visually.

He directed the tanker to lower its refueling boom. The boom operator responded that it already was lowered. When we finally were tucked up under the airplane, the AC was startled at what he saw. Looking up at the vertical stabilizer, he observed a big black eagle and, in large red letters, "AA" painted on the tail. He had closed in on an American Airlines DC-4 cruising at 15,000 feet from Tucson AZ to El Paso TX.

Embarrassed, we slowly backed away. The AC asked me for a heading to the real tanker. Soon, We hooked up and obtained our allotted fuel. The remainder of the mission was uneventful. The American Airlines crew probably never knew a SAC bomber tried to extract fuel from under its tail.

*Robert O. McCartan*



## Crew Reunion

This is the crew (right photo) I was first assigned to in early 1957 when I got to Mountain Home. The AC (on the left), Dick Edmonson, now 91, lives in Huntington Beach CA with his son. Copilot, Paul Johnson, now 80, lives in Salem Oregon, and I, also now 80, live in Spokane WA. We all got together last year in Sacramento to honor and attend a memorial service for a very close friend who had passed away. His name was Bill Musladin, a WWII retread who ended up



at Mt. Home about the same time as a Nav/Bomb guy on a different crew, same squadron, the 1st BS.

The newer picture (above) is of the 3 of us at a 9th BW

reunion held in Tuscon in 1992. Our positions are reversed. I am on the left, Paul Johnson in the middle, and Dick Edmonson is on the right. The aircraft #2135 is the one at the PIMA Air Museum and I am certain you recognize it. The three of us have remained close friends all these years and regularly visit with one another either on e-mail or the phone. Dick left R-22 to become the 1st BS ops. officer and then the final squadron commander before the 9th BW was deactivated in late 1963 and moved to become the 9th Strat Wing at Beale AFB with the 71's. Paul left the crew about 3 years later and went to SAC Hqtrs, Omaha NE. When Dick left the crew we picked up a new AC and became L-02, then had a little good fortune and became S-02. I was moved off the crew to a wing

Stand-Board crew where I remained until the wing closed and the aircraft were sent to DM.

*Tom Gates*

## Memories of Sidi Slimane

It was a very dedicated corps of Curtis LeMay war fighters and maintainers. I am very proud to have been one of them and served during that period of our Air Force History. Not many people even remember what went on during the cold war period. I spent a couple of days at battle stations in our work section waiting to see if we

were going to war that day the Russian ship decided to cross the embargo line. My wife and two little daughters had been told to pack one bag for each of them and standby to be transported to the air terminal to be air lifted out to Europe on 30 minutes' notice. The rest of us would stay behind for whatever came after that. That morning we didn't know if we were going to war or not. We were all fairly certain there was a Russian missile or

*Memories...continued on page 10*

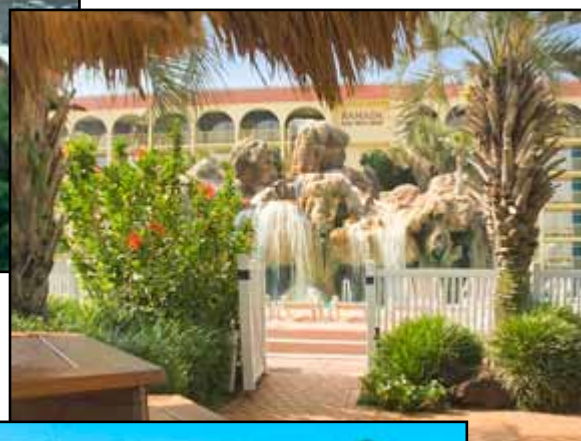
# *Reunion 2014 ~ Ft. Walton Beach FL*

## *30 October - 2 November*



### **Registration**

Registration information was sent out by first class mail in early May. If you failed to receive it, contact Dick Curran (865-940-1020, [dickcurran@hotmail.com](mailto:dickcurran@hotmail.com)) or The Reunion Brat (360-663-2521, [thereunionbrat@hotmail.com](mailto:thereunionbrat@hotmail.com)). The necessary forms are also available at [www.b-47.com](http://www.b-47.com).



### **Hotel**

This year's reunion (our 9th) will be held at the Ramada Plaza Beach Resort Hotel in Ft. Walton Beach, 1500 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach FL 32548. Prices for rooms vary according to view. Parking is complimentary. Reservations can be made through our website ([www.b-47.com](http://www.b-47.com)) or by calling the hotel at 800-874-8962 (make sure you specify that you are attending the B-47 Stratojet Association Reunion). Group hotel rates are available 3 days prior to and after the reunion.



## **Reunion Schedule**

### **Thursday, October 30**

Hotel Check-in (Main Lobby)  
1500-1900 - Open Hospitality Room (The Oasis)  
1900-2100 - Buffet (Ambassador Foyer)

### **Friday, October 31**

0900-1700 - Open Hospitality Room  
0930 - Board buses for National Museum of Naval Aviation  
1030-1530 - Tour National Museum of Naval Aviation  
(Lunch in two groups)  
1530 - Board busses for return to hotel  
(Dinner on your own)

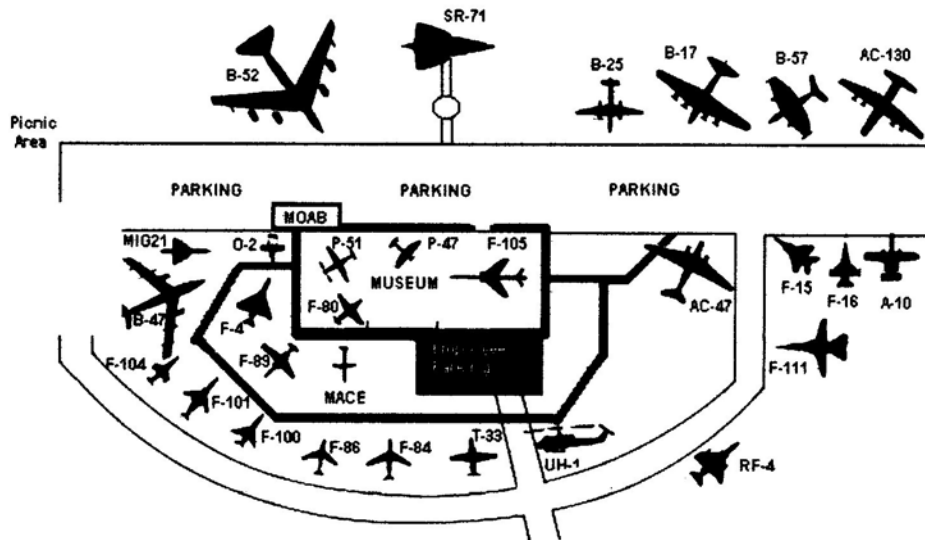
### **Saturday, November 1**

0900-1700 - Open Hospitality Room  
0930 - Board buses for USAF Armament Museum  
1300 - Board buses to return to hotel  
1400-1600 - General membership meeting (Ambassador Rm)  
1800 - No Host Cocktail Party (Ambassador Rm Foyer)  
1830 - Reunion Banquet (Ambassador Room -  
Speaker: General Charles A. Horner USAF(Ret))

### **Sunday, November 2**

Depart

# Air Force Armament Museum - Eglin AFB



The Air Force Armament Museum will be the featured reunion tour on Saturday. The Museum features over 25 aircraft and missiles. The Museum has existed since the mid-70s and presents airborne weapons and their delivery platforms. The B-47 on display is actually a RB-47H, the last one serving with the 55th SRW (and SAC). It has had several nose jobs over the years and we will be featuring an article about its history in the next Newsletter. As shown above the Stratojet has been recently repainted. The markings aren't exactly complete or accurate.

# The National Museum of Naval Aviation - Pensacola

Friday's reunion tour will be The National Museum of Naval Aviation which is located on the Naval Air Station at Pensacola FL. There are over 150 aircraft on exhibit in the Museum building and at outside displays representing all eras of Naval Aviation. The main Museum building is a beautiful facility that features exhibits, theaters, the Cubi Bar Cafe, and a great gift shop. An Imax theater is located in the building and a stunning atrium features a diamond formation of Blue Angel A-4s hanging from the ceiling. Larger and more recent aircraft are exhibited outside in a flight line area near the main facility. Hangar Bay One features Coast Guard aircraft, a Presidential helicopter and prisoner-of-war displays. A trolley provides transportation to the outdoor exhibits. The Blue Angels can sometimes be seen practicing nearby but we may be too late in the year to see them fly. Pensacola is the home of Naval Aviation and the Museum does its job well in relating that story. You will enjoy your visit. Even though there is no B-47 in the Museum, four Stratojets did operate in Navy markings. We will have more about these birds in a future story.

Photo: NMNA





*This old newspaper clipping is from the Roswell NM newspaper . Unfortunately, the date has been cut off. The caption reads "Three of the officers who will probably man one of the two B-47s from the 509th Bomb Wing at Walker entered in this year's annual World Series of Navigation and Bombing to be held by SAC at Limestone AFB, Maine. Left to right: Maj. William N. Ellison, aircraft commander; Lt. Robert P. Gaspard, co-pilot; and Lt. Col Ray I. Gutfelder, observer." Do any of our readers remember these guys and the year this photo was taken? Do any of you have stories about the competitions that you would share with our members? B-47s were entered in the competition from 1953 thru 1961. The 1962 event was cancelled due to the Cuban Missile Crisis. The 1963 and '64 competitions were not held due to "cost reductions and operational commitments."*



*This photo has been often seen but seldom correctly identified. It shows the takeoff of B-47B 49-2644, the testbed for Aerojet's liquid RATO system. Seen here at Edwards AFB in 1954, the system is demonstrated successfully after years of explosions and other problems. Despite the success, the tests were terminated and use of the solid rockets continued until the B-47s were retired.*

*Photo: Aerojet*



## *Flipped by a Fuel Quantity Indicator*

We've all heard of some of the shortcomings on our beloved B-47s, but we've also recognized that it was a plane that was pioneering new ground in aviation, while still having to use some of the technology left over from WWII, so a few shortcomings could be tolerated. The fuel quantity gauges were in this category. It was a minor inconvenience that the sensors could only power one gauge at a time and that the co-pilot (except during in-flight refueling) would need to take control of the gauges for a second or two to update his gauges. A far bigger problem, at least for Crew Chiefs on B-47s in extreme cold climates, was the tab type quantity indicators for the forward auxiliary and aft auxiliary fuel tanks. These indicators had three readings: F for full, E for empty and an intermediate indication for anything in between. Intermediate could be a few pounds from being full or a few pounds from being empty.

The problem for the Crew Chief came about in extreme cold conditions. I was a Crew Chief with the 530th Bomb Squadron, 380th Bomb Wing at Plattsburgh AFB from 1956 to 1959. Plattsburgh definitely qualified as extremely cold in winter. The airplanes were normally refueled from an underground fuel system shortly after landing. The fuel temperature was probably in the range of 40 to 50 degrees F. After cold-soaking for a day or two in the teens or near zero temperatures, the fuel would shrink from the cold and the flip-type indicators would go to intermediate. The drop tanks had similar indicators but, due to the sensor placement and the angle of the tank on the ground, they would normally remain at a full indication.

It really wasn't practical to have POL send out a truck or have the ground fuel cart come out for a few pounds of fuel to bring the indicators back up to Full. There was, however, a method of doing an "abnormal" fuel transfer to accomplish this. "Abnormal" because you weren't supposed to be able to transfer fuel from a main to an auxiliary tank. As far as I know, the method wasn't listed in any tech orders or manuals. I assume that it was also used at other cold climate installations. I have no idea who was the first person to figure out the procedure. It was passed down from Crew Chief to Crew Chief. I would normally accomplish it during the ground crew preflight before the flight crew came out. After more than 50 years I can still recall the process as though it were yesterday.

It goes as follows:

1. Take a ladder into the bomb bay, go up into the hell hole, cut the safety wire on the Manual Defueling Valve and open it.
2. Put power on the airplane, climb up into the cockpit and, at the pilot's station, open the Aux Fuel to Engines Valve (with the switch so named).
3. Go back to the co-pilot's station and pull the circuit breaker for the Aux Fuel to Engines Valve (thus keeping it open during the next step).
4. At the pilot's station, place the Master Refuel Switch in the Refuel position and turn the #2 (or #5) fuel selector to TME, thus pressurizing the refueling manifold via the engine manifold.
5. Go to the co-pilot's station and open the valves to top off the Forward and Aft Auxiliary fuel tanks. The flip indicators would go to F in a few seconds.
6. Turn off the valves and reset the Aux Fuel to Engines Valve circuit breaker.
7. At the pilot's station, turn the #2 fuel selector to TE, place the Master Refuel Switch back to Normal and close the Aux Fuel to Engines Valve.
8. Back in the bomb bay, close the Manual Defueling Valve and safety wire it.

That's all there was to it. The amount of fuel that was taken from the Center Main tank wasn't even detectable on the gauge. At first, the process sounds a little complex, but it actually took longer to safety wire the Manual Defueling Valve in the hell hole than it did to accomplish the whole rest of the procedure.

Obviously, dip-sticking the Forward Auxiliary tank was always a good idea considering its effect on weight and balance for take-off, but having the flip indicators read F instead of intermediate made the flight crews feel a little better too.

*Wes Bender*

*Memories...* continued from page 5

two sitting in a silo in Russia somewhere with our name and address on it. (I am presuming the 30 minute bug-out period started when they detected ICBM launches). We were also fairly certain they knew what our mission was — that we had special weapons stored on base and we were a forward recovery and re-arm base. None of us were so sure there would be anything or anyone left to recover and re-arm anything after the first strike. That was the reality of it behind all the pre-notice, etc. That was the part that the public never knew and only those of us who were there under the gun fully appreciated. Now I know how the boys at Wake Island felt (laughing!)

I was a part of the 6th Munitions Maintenance Squadron at Sidi Slimane. I was working late one night, catching up on inspections, when a Chrome Dome B-52 (airborne alert) landed. It had a malfunctioning clip-in system loaded with MK28 nuclear bombs. Being knowledgeable of the clip-in system, I was able to quickly correct the malfunction. The aircraft was airborne within 30 minutes after it had landed, back on airborne alert. The engines on the B-52 were never shut down while it was on the ground. I earned an “atta boy” that day.

**Tom Nation**

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*Heard by a controller at Ellsworth Approach Control back in the '80s.*

*ATC: Western 474, Ellsworth Approach Control is utilizing a certain phase of the radar called circular polarization, which allows us to depict only the most severe areas of weather on the radar display.*

*[Long Pause...]*

*Western 474: Approach, say again, please.*

*ATC: [repeated the message]*

*[Second Long Pause...]*

*Western 474: Approach, we don't know what's going on down there, but the co-pilot seems to think that somebody just circumcised a polar bear.*



## **BX**

The former Association BX has closed. We refer you to [cafepress.com](http://cafepress.com) for a large array of B-47-related items and we encourage you to consider these if you are looking for items to wear and/or display your Association affiliation.

The B-47 Flight Jacket is once again available. See the Association website at [b-47.com](http://b-47.com) for more information and an order form, or contact Dick Curran at the address on the *Newsletter* masthead (also on the membership application on page 11).

## **Publications**



*Aeroplane (Aeroplane Monthly)* magazine published an 18 page article on the B-47 in the March 2014 (Vol. 42 No. 3, Issue 491) issue of the British publication. Eighteen pages of text, photos and drawings are featured in their “DataBase” series. The piece features design history, variants and operational use with SAC. There is little new here but the it is well written and illustrated. You might even find a few errors but, all-in-all, a worthy addition to your B-47 material. The issue may still be available from Barnes & Noble. Back issues are available at: Kelsey Shop, [www.kelseyshop.co.uk](http://www.kelseyshop.co.uk).



**Send Application and Check to**

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 Dandridge, TN 37725-3333

Tel. (865) 940-1028 e-mail: [dickcurran@hotmail.com](mailto:dickcurran@hotmail.com)

(Last) (First) (Middle Initial) (Highest Rank Achieved)

(Spouses First Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

B-47 Wings you served with and dates of service: \_\_\_\_\_

Air Crew or Ground Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Civilian Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Status: Active Duty \_\_\_\_\_ Retired, when? \_\_\_\_\_ Separated, when? \_\_\_\_\_ Veteran \_\_\_\_\_

Civilian, your relationship to the B-47: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Any other comments you may care to add: \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual dues are \$15 a year payable every January. Send checks to: The B-47 Stratojet Association.**

The Lifetime membership option is obtained by using the below table:

under age 58	\$300
age 60-64	\$250
age 65-69	\$200
age 70-74	\$150
age 75-79	\$100
age 80 or over	\$50

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send application and check to:  
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*We have featured this airplane several times before but never with such dramatic lighting effect. Photographer Jeff Welker shot EB-47E, 53-2135 (on display at the Pima Air & Space Museum in Tucson) at night. Note the light trails left by vehicles on East Valencia Road behind the Stratojet. We appreciate his permission to use this beautiful photograph in this issue of the Newsletter.*

*Photo: Jeff D. Welker*

***Next Reunion ~ 30 October-2 November 2014 ~ Ft Walton Beach FL  
Pay Your Dues For 2014 Today!***