

# The Stratojet

## Newsletter

Winter 2015 Volume 45

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



Sigmund (Alex) Alexander's son took this photo of a wonderful painting in the Boy Scout Headquarters Building in Dallas. Uncle Sam has his working clothes on with a B-47 in his hand ready to launch as part of the arsenal of democracy. The Boy Scout is holding a wooden model of the Stratojet (remember those?) as he visits with a pilot and gazes upward at a sky filled with Boeing's finest. The artist was Dean Conwell (1892-1960) and he did the painting for the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company's annual calendar. He did a great job in depicting the Cold War home environment. The title is **Uncle Sam's Air Force, 1952**, and it was presented to the Scouts by Goodyear in 1963. What a wonderful slice of Americana. Thanks, Alex, for sharing this great piece of patriotic art.

### ***From The President's Desk***

Among all the political folderol I've been hearing in the last few months, I heard one pundit raise the question of how we were able to recruit the committed soldiers, sailors and airmen we do in this very dangerous time. He was, in effect, asking why American men and women would choose to fight for this country.

I was reminded of a time years ago when my small children were asking the same question. It was 1968 and I had orders to attend the Royal Air Force Staff College just outside London. My daughters were quite young and impres-

*President's Desk* continued...p. 10

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

**Robert (Bob) L. Hensz** of Bryan TX, 14 May 2015

**Charles A. Powell III** of Ft. Meyers FL, 31 July 2015

**Robert D. Sweeney** of El Dorado Hills CA, 30 September 2015

**Kenneth R. Tolin** of Odessa TX, 31 October 2015



*A nice bright postcard from the good ole days. While many base postcards featured photos of the B-47, this one used artwork and neat vignettes of scenes from the base in spelling out "MacDill Field." If you have a postcard from your base, send us a scan and we will use it in a future newsletter.*



## ***Important Reminder***

- **Pay your dues for 2016** (the number on your mailing label indicates the year through which you are paid-up).
- 2016 Reunion - Washington DC area - 29 Sept-2 Oct
- Send stories, letters, memories, & photos to Editor, cmhs@sbcglobal.net, PO Box 1144, Brenham TX 77834

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## First Flight

December 17, 2015 marks 68 years since Bob Robbins and Scott Osler lifted the first XB-47 into a cloudy Seattle sky. Although the takeoff was hindered by weather and an instrument malfunction the flight was made without any significant problems to a successful landing at Moses Lake WA. The flight was given



much coverage by the Seattle media but neither Boeing nor the new USAF was all that interested in the new bomber that many felt had no mission.

The persistence of a small cadre of Boeing engineers, test technicians and pilots, and a similar small group of Air Force research personnel soon persuaded both organizations to take the new aircraft seriously. The advent of hostilities in Korea provided additional motivation and soon the Pentagon, the White House and Congress opened the floodgates for over two thousand of the sleek new airplane.

The accompanying photo (discovered by President Emeritus Sigmund Alexander at a Texas paper show) illustrates the huge leap forward represented by the Stratojet. Bob Robbins became the project test pilot for the B-29 after legendary test pilot Eddie Allen was killed in the crash of the XB-29. Bob's next project (except a brief stint testing the XPBB-1 flying boat) was the XB-47. Although close in time, the two airplanes represented two very different eras in aviation history.

The B-47 became the sire of virtually all large jet aircraft to follow, even up to the present day. We celebrate the contributions of those early jet-era pioneers

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## Toss-Bombing Test Pilot Goes West

Richard "Dick" Taylor, long-time Boeing test pilot, passed away on 25 September 2015. He was 93. Dick is best remembered in B-47 circles as the test pilot who put the Stratojet through its initial LABS (Low-Altitude Bombing System) trials in the mid-1950s. His flight proved the airplane was capable of executing the maneuver and reinforced its reputation as "looking and flying like a fighter."

Taylor graduated from Purdue University with an engineering degree and served as a spotter pilot during WWII. He was employed by Boeing as a flight test engineer in 1946 but soon moved to the pilot's seat. He flew trials on the KB-29 as the world's first air-to-air boom operator. Then came over 2,000 hours in the B-47 as a test pilot at the Wichita plant.

After his days in Kansas he moved back to Seattle and eventually became Boeing's Director of Engineering. As such, he earned the title "Father of the 737." Later he headed efforts on extended-range twin-engine operations which led to him being called "Father of ETOPS."

At the time of his death Dick was still an active pilot. He owned at least eight different airplanes over the years. The last, an Aerostar (known as a "pilot's airplane" because of its high performance), was having new instruments installed so he had not flown it since last December.



Dick served on our distinguished panel of B-47 pioneers at the 2002 reunion in Seattle. Later, he and USAF test pilot B/G Guy Townsend shared memories of Stratojet test flights, including LABS, at the banquet.

Most all of those pioneers are now gone.

## ***TWO MAN POLICY AND THE B-47***

*An advantage or disadvantage of being elderly is that one thinks of things of the past and wonders if they are as they seem or at least, in reflection, if they actually occurred as recalled.*

*The following is such a reflection from 1960-1966.*

The two man policy in the Strategic Air Command stated that no person would have access to a nuclear weapon, the combat mission folder (CMF), the go to war tickets, and release mechanisms for the said weapon(s). This was strictly adhered to by the crews of the SAC bomber force. As a direct participant in the activity of the SAC bomber crew force, I understood this and never questioned the fact that it might have been violated unintentionally.

I was told by my first aircraft commander that at one time, well before I came on the scene, the aircraft commander actually carried the go to war tickets on a chain around his neck. I had no reason to doubt this and accepted it as fact. The two man policy must have come along later.

The normal procedure while on alert was to preflight the aircraft each morning and cock it for immediate start if the klaxon sounded. This included a walk around exterior check to see that everything was where it was supposed to be and in good condition visually. The crew would check the weapon(s) usually on the first day when they accepted responsibility for the aircraft and mission, and knowing that no one had been in the bomb bay, did not check again until an aircraft change was made or crew changeover a week later.

The interior preflight was completed according to the checklist and if everything was in good working order, the aircraft would be cocked for immediate start if and when required.

On my first day of alert after cocking the aircraft, the aircraft commander told me there was a requirement to manually reset the generators to ensure they would come on line when the engines were started during an alert start. I have since tried to find this requirement in the Dash 1, but have been unsuccessful.

This procedure consisted of descending the entrance ladder about halfway to enter the crawlway to the bomb bay. Situated along the crawlway were six generators with a small rectangular switch that had to be pressed down to

reset them. I am not sure how this all worked. But I was informed that by doing this it ensured that the generators would come on line properly. Now there were six generator switches on the copilot's instrument panel which would be activated on a normal engine start. The explanation I received was that if one of them failed to reset on an alert start I would have to enter the crawlway and manually reset it.

The pilot admitted he had never encountered this difficulty, but I should follow the procedure. After the third alert tour, he said forget it and reset them from your seat.

The question about the two man policy is that in the B-47 no crewmember could actually see what the other was doing, for it was tandem seating with the navigator in the nose out of sight completely whereas the pilots could at least see each other's helmets if they tried.

Was it possible for the nav to activate any control over the weapon(s) thus violating the two man policy? I honestly cannot recall. It has been over fifty years since I was in the aircraft.

When the copilot entered the crawlway he had a clear path to the bomb bay and the weapon(s). After the first indoctrination as to where the switches were located and how to reset them, I don't recall anyone ever standing on the ladder to observe the activity.

Was the two man policy violated?

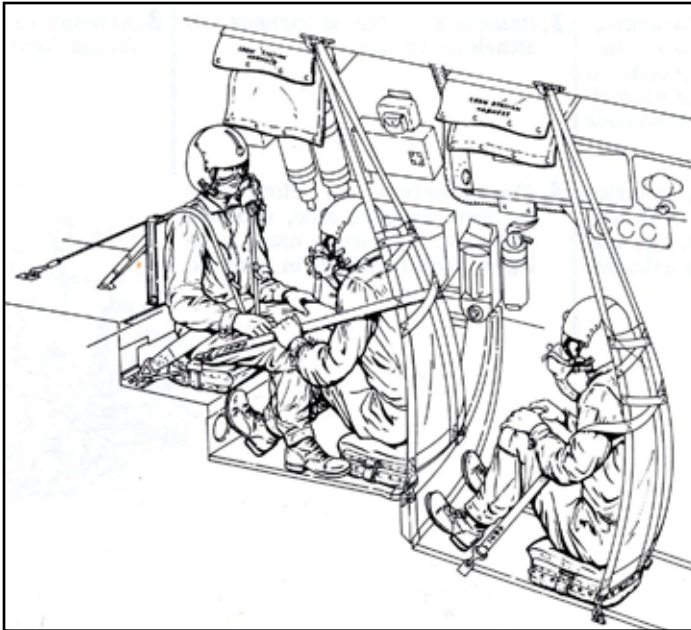
***Jim Hooppaw***



## A Raven's Story ~ Part 2

*This series of stories are dedicated to the Officers and Airmen of the 301st Bomb Wing; 32nd, 352nd, 352rd and 419th Bomb Squadrons. The only wing in SAC to operate a fully functional EB-47E "Raven Manned" Electronic Warfare offensive jamming system!*

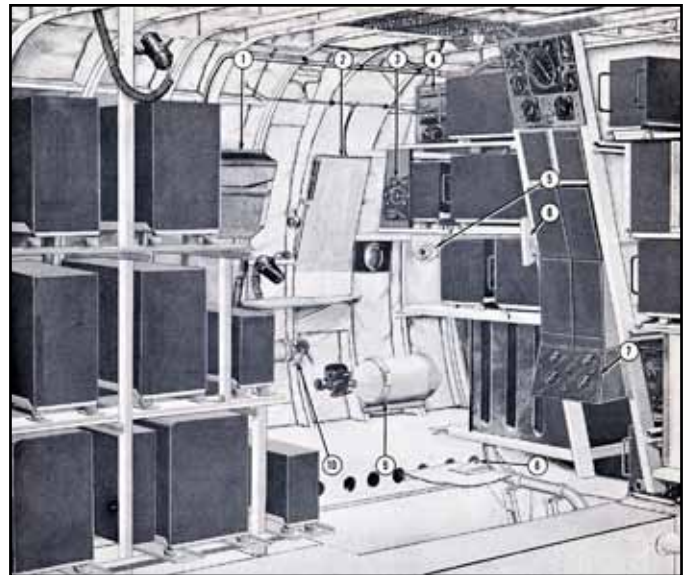
Let me relate to you what it was like for take-off and landing. Both "Ravens" in full flight gear would be the last into the cockpit once the 3 flight crew members got seated. Then we took our positions on the step(s) to the left of the pilot and co-pilot. In the upper position you leaned back (or your parachute did) against the bulkhead, and the other Raven could fold out a dinky little back rest in the lower (by the pilot) position (see the picture below for the crew positions).



Once airborne but below 10,000 feet, you then opened the inner pressure door to the cockpit and made a "risky" left turn into the 24-foot-long tunnel back to the bomb bay, or in our case the "Capsule". Last man had to close the pressure door, sometimes the navigator got unstrapped and secured this door when we went into the tunnel, then the first man in the tunnel had to open the capsule pressure door. We then squat crawled into the capsule. We turned on all electrical systems, heat and air conditioning (the heat was always too hot and the air conditioning never really worked correctly) and then got into our downward ejection seats with a "breakable" fiberglass floor beneath our feet. We used to say if it was light it must be noon and if it was dark it must be midnight!

Listed below are the "Black Boxes" we operated, please note I was in the Phase V, Block 2 Blue Cradle, all the Block 1 birds had all been upgraded by then. The following is a list of our equipment, Raven 1 (Electronic Warfare Officer) operated the Jammers, and Raven 2 (Electronic Warfare Technician) operated all the Receivers. Additionally, all ARC-58 SSB frequencies were monitored, and since this radio could be operated either voice mode or Morse code (CW) my job was to man this radio too. It had the capability to operate on all frequencies from 3 to 30 MHz (or 10 Meter to 100 Meter) bands for you Ham radio geeks. A quick explanation of the bands (e.g. Frequencies) are: A=100-250 MHz, B=250-500 MHz, C=500-1000 MHz, D=1000-2000 MHz, E=2000-3000 MHz, F=3000-4000 MHz, G=4000-5000 MHz, H=6000-8000 MHz, I=8000-10000 MHz, J=10000-20000 MHz, K=20000-40000 MHz.

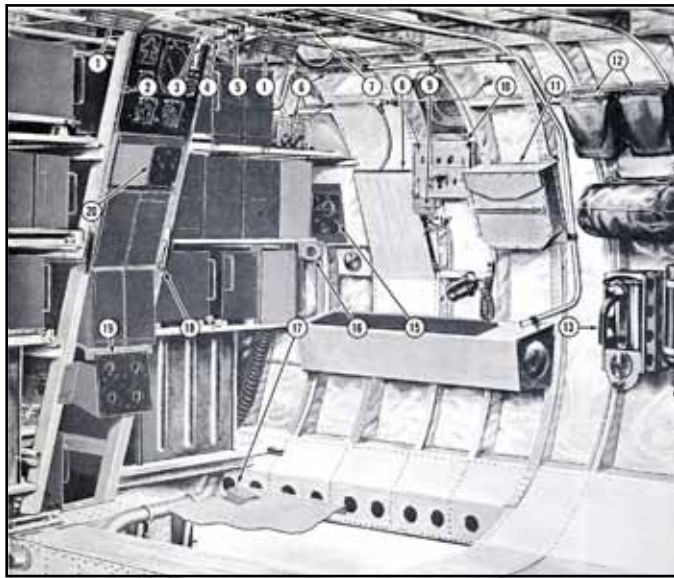
A normal (what's normal?) mission could last from 5 or 6 hours to a 12+ hour trans-Atlantic trip from Lockbourne AFB (Columbus, Ohio) to one of our bases in Morocco, Spain, or England. We had an intercom to the cockpit so we knew when we were hooking up for a refueling. In addition to the "Black Boxes" we had a few instruments found in the cockpit up front, Clock, Compass, Altimeter, and Airspeed Indicator, and several Oscilloscopes that could display the signal strength of the enemy's transmissions. This was supposed to keep track of the Russian made "Fansong" acquisition radar, used in the SA-2 ground control systems.



*Raven...continued on page 6*



...Raven continued from page 5



Since there are no Technical Order prints of the actual crew positions for takeoff and landing, I am inserting some of Bruce Bailey's photo art for the RB-47H which had a 3-man crew in a compartment. They had a lot more room than we did. Remember we were hanging by the "bomb shackles" and the capsule was about the size of a 22,000-pound nuclear weapon, which would have been in the bomb bay. The dimensions of the overall bomb bay were 25.5 feet long by 9.7 feet in diameter. Once the "Capsule" was in place the relative inside space was about 20% less.

In the next edition I will tell you the history and story behind the ubiquitous downward ejection seat, which is still in use in the B-52.

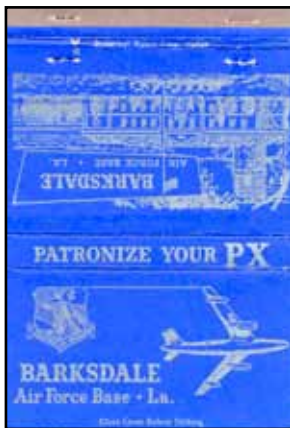
Dick Curran

## Welcome New Members!

Jerry A. Creasey, Oak Ridge TN

Lewis H. Enloe, Jr., Kuna ID

Willis G. Newton, Yuba City CA



The matchbook (above) is from Barksdale AFB and it features a B-47 inflight. Most base PXs had them. If you have one from your base, send a scan and we'll use it in a future newsletter.



Adventures In Jet Power (right) - General Electric played a big part in the B-47 program (as well as F-86 and B-36 production) and they were never hesitant to feature the Stratojet prominently in their advertising. This comic booklet was a promotional peace passed out to school kids during the 1950s. It illustrated how a jet engine worked (using the J-47 as a model) and told the history of the development of jet propulsion. The booklet was part of G.E.'s **Adventures in Science** series that featured their products.

# Chanute Air Museum XB-47 Stratojet Final Report

The following work activities were performed on the XB-47 (Tail # 46-0066) during this final quarterly report of July 1, 2015 – September 30, 2015.

July 22nd - Stenciled "FUEL TANK VENT" above 9 fuel tank vents on the fuselage and "AFT RADAR COMPARTMENT" on the radar compartment door.

August 28th – Stenciled two areas on the fuselage to read "UPPER RADAR COMPARTMENT" and "U. S. ARMY – MODEL XB -47 AIR FORCES SERIAL NO. 46-66 CREW WEIGHT 500LBS.

September 9th – Began cleaning the XB-47 storage cabinet in the museum workshop and made two stencils that read "CAMERA DOOR" and "FWD BOOSTER PUMP SEAL VENT".

September 30th – The above stencils could not be applied due to wind in the air park. The storage cabinet was cleared with exception of the stencils and a few small items that could be sent with the XB-47 to the Test Flight Museum in California.

Approximately 14 hours of work were performed during this 3rd Quarter by Rol Barger, Trevor Leach, Richard Redden and Pete Troesch.

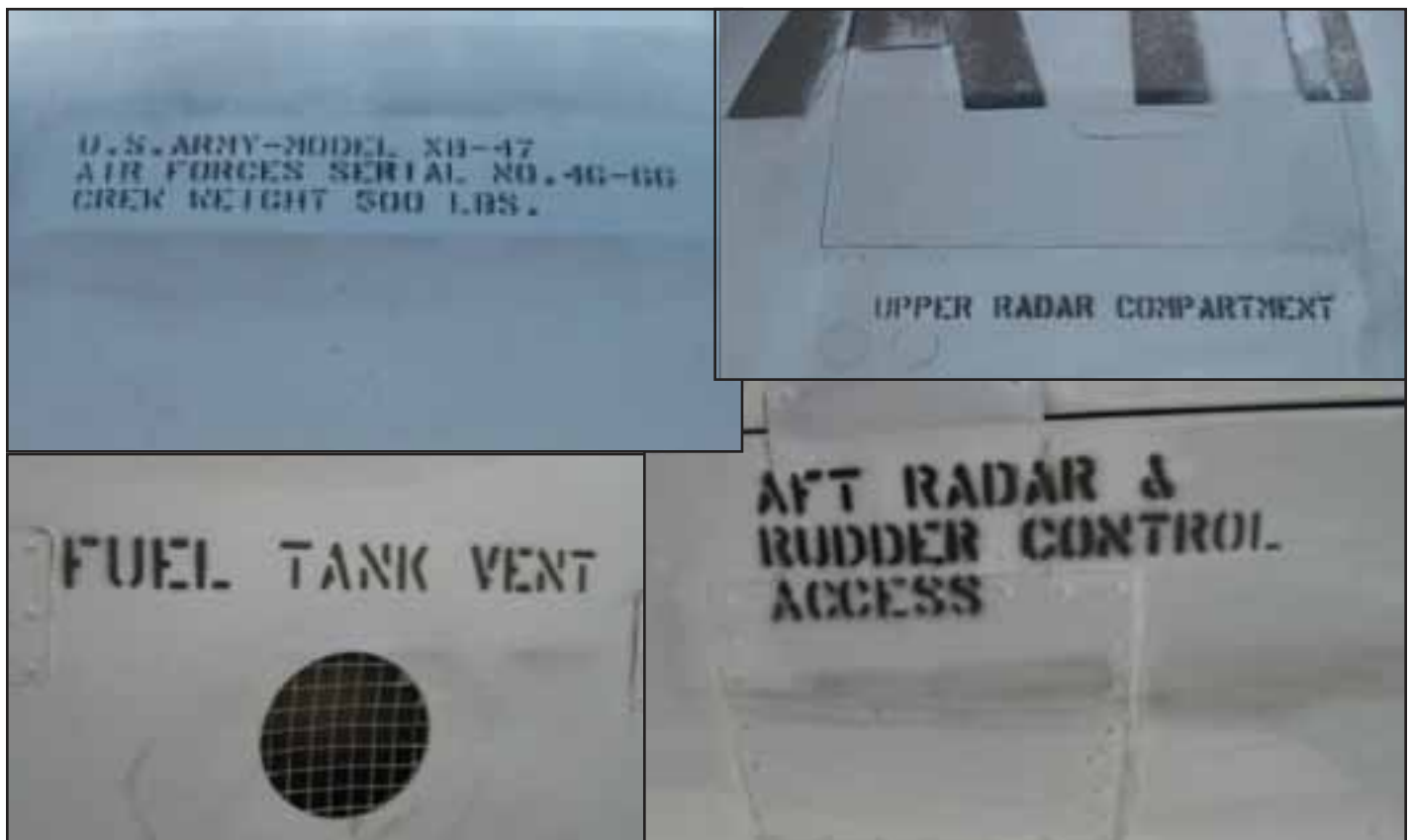
A total of 1,677 hours of work and activities related to the XB-47 have been performed on the Stratojet since recording of work hours began in July, 2009.

Pete Troesch

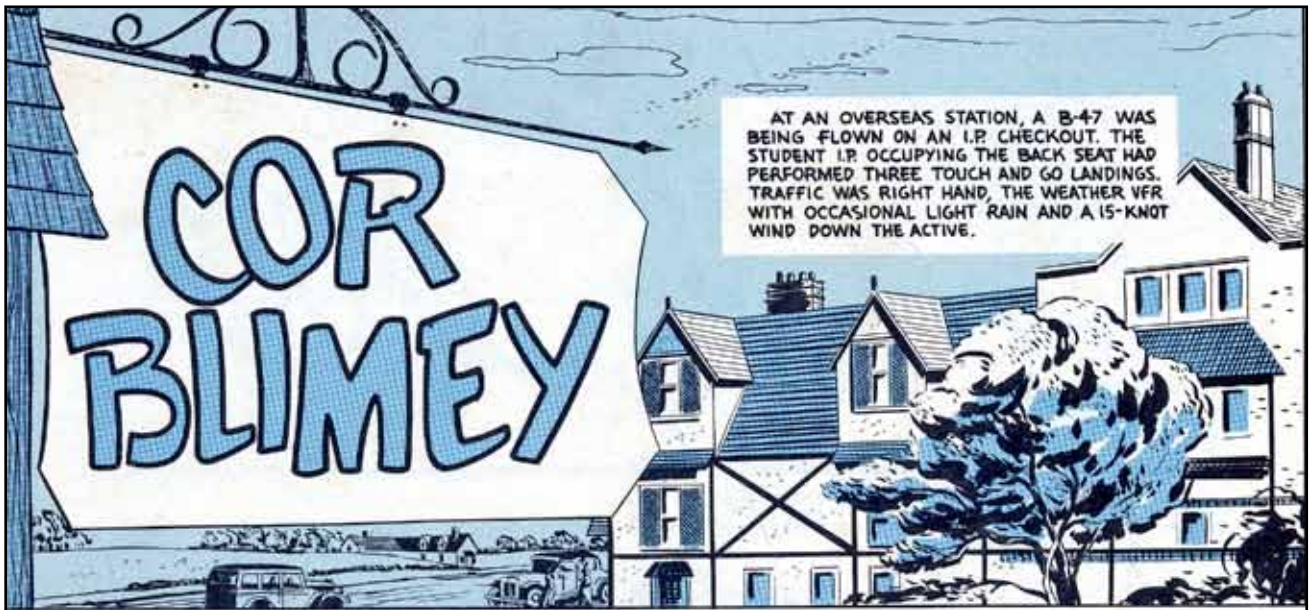
*A hearty "thank you" from the Association to these guys for all of their hard work on this true aviation treasure. Pete was also instrumental in getting the \$1,300 balance in the XB-47 restoration account refunded to the Association so it can be applied to future projects. The Chanute Museum is now closed and the future of the XB remains uncertain.*

***ALERT** - As we were going to press, we learned that the Air Force Flight Test Museum still needs a great deal of funding for the move to Edwards AFB. You can help. There is a "GoFundMe" online account for contributions. You can go directly to the Museum site at <http://www.edwardsmuseum.org> to find the "GoFundMe" link or how to donate directly. How sad it would be to see the airplane scrapped.*

*The collage of photos below represent work on the Stratojet as noted above. We hope the new owners appreciate the labor that Pete and his crew did in their restoration efforts (<http://afftcmuseum.org/save-the-xb-47/>).* Photos: Pete Troesch







AT AN OVERSEAS STATION, A B-47 WAS BEING FLOWN ON AN I.P. CHECKOUT. THE STUDENT I.P. OCCUPYING THE BACK SEAT HAD PERFORMED THREE TOUCH AND GO LANDINGS. TRAFFIC WAS RIGHT HAND, THE WEATHER VFR WITH OCCASIONAL LIGHT RAIN AND A 15-KNOT WIND DOWN THE ACTIVE.



TURN ONTO FINAL FOR A FOURTH LANDING WAS NORMAL. THE STRATOJET CONTINUED ITS APPROACH CARRYING 3 TO 4 KNOTS ABOVE BEST APPROACH SPEED. CONSIDERABLE ALTITUDE WAS LOST AND WHEN STILL 1000 FEET OUT, THE AIRCRAFT WAS ONLY 10 TO 20 FEET ABOVE THE GROUND IN A LEVEL ATTITUDE.



THIS GUYS A LITTLE LOW BUT HES KEEPING THE AIRSPEED UP SO I GUESS WERE OK... NO SWEAT, BUT *MAYBE* I SHOULD ADD SOME POWER...



AT A POINT 225 FEET SHORT OF THE RUNWAY, THE B-47 TOUCHED DOWN IN SOFT GROUND. THE LEFT OUTRIGGER GEAR PENETRATED DEEP ENOUGH TO BREAK THE IN-BOARD STRUT ASSEMBLY, THEN THE AIRCRAFT REBOUNDED ONTO THE RUNWAY.

*COR BLIMEY! DID YER SEE THAT ?!!*



THE DECELERATION CHUTE WAS DEPLOYED, ENGINES STOPPED AND FIRE BUTTONS PULLED. NUMBER TWO AND THREE PODS RESTED ON THE RUNWAY SUPPORTED ONLY BY THE OUTRIGGER WHEEL TWISTED AT A BACKWARD ANGLE. *NO ONE WAS INJURED*



INVESTIGATION REVEALED THAT RAIN ON THE WINDSHIELD PLUS RESTRICTED VISIBILITY FROM THE BACK SEAT CAUSED THE STUDENT I.P. TO MISJUDGE HIS ALTITUDE. ALTHOUGH BOTH PILOTS APPLIED POWER SIMULTANEOUSLY WHEN THE B-47 BEGAN TO SETTLE, THE INSTRUCTOR'S CORRECTIVE ACTION CAME TOO LATE.



## Bombers B-52

I just finished watching an old movie, *Bombers B-52*, from 1957. The script was quite trite to the point of being downright corny, but that did not bother me.

Amazingly, I was a young man again for two hours. This movie had considerable footage showing B-47Es. I saw B-47Es being maintained, taking off, landing, taxiing and being towed. For a while, I felt as though my aircraft, 53-2123, was parked on the ramp somewhere.

There is no doubt in my mind that the B-47 was the most beautiful aircraft ever built. She was an absolute pleasure to look at and flew like a large fighter. Becoming a crew chief with its duties and responsibilities stripped me of any remaining immaturity.

My aircraft belonged to me while she was on the ground. People worked for me and reported to me. This was my first position of such authority and responsibility. I accepted this authority and responsibility proudly and I toed the line myself and I saw to it that everyone else involved with my aircraft toed the line also. It had been suggested more than once that I was a sonava bitch to work for, a title I bore proudly.

The movie ended and I became seventy-six again. Surprisingly, tears ran down my cheeks. It truly breaks my tired ol heart to accept the fact that my bird no longer exists. She is as gone as my youth. That's okay, for two hours we both were young again!

Ralph Bleiler



## My Bird 53- 2123

*The lights go down on the flight-line,  
And a hush comes over us all.  
A long, long night is setting in,  
It's going to get mighty cold.*

*Along comes the line chief,  
His moustache flapping in the breeze.  
And with a breath that is reeking,  
Of stale coffee and old cheese.*

*We have an engine to change,  
For tomorrow on alert she'll go.  
This will be nice and easy,  
As long as it doesn't snow.*

*My aircraft will once again,  
Be loaded and fully cocked.  
We pray she'll never be needed,  
Her weapons are loaded and locked.*

*In the end, she never went to war,  
To keep our nation free.  
The one and only casualty,  
Was the youth which was in me.*

Ralph Bleiler

*These two photos of engine changes illustrate Ralph's poem although it is not his airplane and it isn't cold or dark.  
Photos: USAF*



...President's Desk continued from p. 1

-sionable and I was concerned that a year or more overseas might weaken their love of our country. I set upon a planned bit of tourism taking them to as many of our national sites as I could. A huge number of these sites were battlefields. It was obvious in these visits that many had lain down their lives for this country. The question most often asked by the girls was "Why?"

They wondered why we had fought at Bull Run and why so many laid down their lives at Antietam. At Gettysburg they learned of the valiant stand made at the High Water Mark of the Confederacy where their own great-great grandfather had fought and they asked why and how men could be so brave. At Yorktown we stood in Redoubt #10 which Alexander Hamilton had taken from the British and again the question "why?" was asked.

I always did my best to answer their queries but never felt I had quite nailed it. Then, one day, we visited the National Archives where we stood before the sacred documents of American history, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Finally, I was able to say to the girls "Here is why!" The ideas in these documents are the "why" Americans through the ages have stood up and put their lives on the line. This is why we all signed that blank check for Uncle Sam. Because we believed in the ideas Jefferson, Washington and the founding fathers put in those documents.

I don't recall ever discussing these ideas with my fellow airmen, but I knew enough fine people whose lives were governed by these concepts to know that those ideas were the reason we stood alert in SAC and why we spent long hours on the flightline to insure those ideas were never compromised. I've no doubt that those who've followed in our footsteps in the military, also do so for the same reasons. Let's hope that fact never changes and those ideas still govern this great country for years to come.

Don Cassidy



An anonymous donor has given the Association an original copy of the **B-47B Training Manual** from the early 1950s. It will be placed in the Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum for display and reference. The Museum is the official repository for the B-47 Stratojet Association.

## B-47 Merchandise

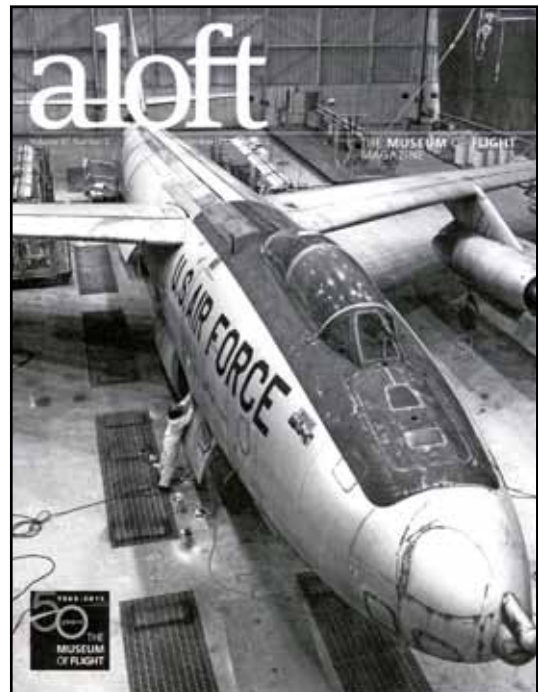
The internet has a remarkable array of B-47 products at a site called [cafepress.com](http://www.cafepress.com) and we encourage you to consider these if you are looking for B-47 items. The Association no longer stocks items and we suggest you take a look at this website. It has been recently updated with new products featuring the red/black "horn button." Use this [new link](http://www.cafepress.com/b47stratojetassociation) 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.

## Publications

The September/October 2015 issue of *Aloft*, the magazine of the Museum of Flight in Seattle displays its WB-47E, 51-7066 on its cover. The airplane is shown in the restoration hangar before work was begun on updating the appearance (see photo on back cover). The Museum of Flight is located on Boeing Field, the sight of the first flight of the XB-47 in 1947 and it is a



wonderful facility with a wide range of displays and artifacts. The original Boeing plant ("The Red Barn") has been incorporated into the overall layout and it is a must-see when you are in the northwest. The magazine is available with membership and details are available at the MOF website:

<http://www.museumofflight.org>





**Send Application and Check to:**

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Dandridge, TN 37725-3333

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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 59 \$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:**

**Dick Curran**

**B- 47 Stratojet Association**

**219 Charles Court**

**Dandridge, TN 37725-3333**

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*The WB-47E at Seattle's Museum of Flight is shown after emerging from the restoration hangar. When we saw it last (at the 2002 Reunion) it looked pretty sad. Although it is still outdoors the airplane is well maintained. Photo: Museum of Flight*

***2016 Reunion: Washington DC ~ 29 Sept-2 Oct***



