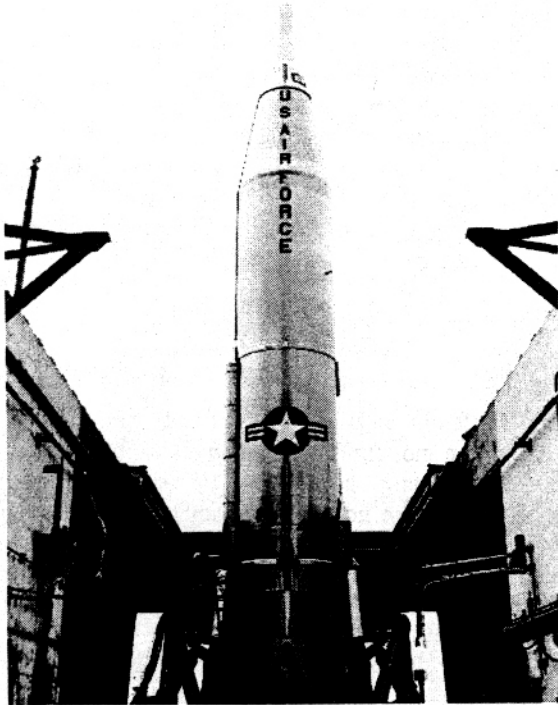


1st Reunion A Resounding Success!



Recap of the First Reunion of the 548th SMS

Over 38 years after the deactivation of the 548th SMS in early 1965, 66 former members, the widow and daughter of a member and about 50 spouse and guest of the 548th members gathered in Topeka on the Labor Day week-end, August 27th through the 31st. Reunion registration started in the early afternoon on Wednesday the 27th. Thursday morning activities began with a tour of the facilities and aircraft of the 190th Air Refueling Wing (Kansas Air National Guard) that is based on an enclave of the former Forbes AFB, (Forbes Field is now a commercial airport). Following the tour a picnic was held in an air-conditioned shelter house at Lake Shawnee.

Friday morning found the attendees on two tour busses headed for visits to some of the former missile sites. Along with the Friday site tours a box lunch picnic was held in a quiet park in Burlingame, Kansas. Burlingame is located about half way between the locations of the missile sites that we visited and made a good meeting point for the busses traveling to the opposite location.

Saturday morning we car-pooled north for a tour of site 9 (Jackson Heights High School). The afternoon was left open for us to do our own thing.

A reunion dinner was held Saturday evening, August 30th, with the guest speaker being Colonel Charles Simpson, USAF Retired, Executive Director of the Association of Air Force Missileers. In his talk, Colonel Simpson reviewed significant events in the history of the ICBM force and related some of his own contacts during his Air Force years with missileers who served as members of the 548th SMS. Many of the members said their final goodbyes at a Sunday morning buffet breakfast in the hotel.

Some of the memories relived during the reunion concerned the squadron's early years when the United States had a small ICBM force which played an important role in our nation's defense during those "high tension" years. Training classes at Sheppard AFB, Texas, and Vandenberg AFB, California and acceptance of the missile sites from contractors were all discussed. The squadron's activities during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963, and other crises periods of the early 1960s were also major topics of conversation.

Besides renewing old acquaintances and reliving memories, the highlight for the former SAC missileers was the tour of four of the nine Atlas E coffin-style missile sites that comprised the squadron. While two of the sites were not significantly modified from their demilitarized condition, one (site # 6 at Keene, Kansas) has had significant upgrades and modifications, converting the underground Launch Operations Building into a modern residence.

The unique features of this underground home have been described in numerous newspaper and

magazine articles. The site has also been featured on the Home and Garden Television Network.

Another site (site #9 at Holton, Kansas) has been modified into a modern building for the Jackson Heights High School. The high school, with classroom space in both the Launch Operations Building and the Launch and Service Building, has integrated many site features into the school complex. A brilliant red, white, and blue scheme is used on the long site tunnel and provides a highlight for the students moving between their classes.

The Atlas E missileers were impressed not only by the excellent use of the ex-missile site by the school district, but also by the numerous records established by the school and proudly displayed in the banner-lined gymnasium.

There was plenty of time for visiting in the hospitality suite that was set up in the hotel. As part of the hospitality display there were aerial photographs of 8 of our sites, crew photos and many other documents and squadron memorabilia which included a complete Dash One T.O. that had made it's way into one members personal possession.

The Topeka area welcomed the returning missileers both individually and through press coverage. The Topeka Capital Journal newspaper had a crew accompany the missileers and their wives for some of the site tours, and a French film crew accompanied other members for the tour of site #6.

One unexpected event in the hospitality suite was the visit by a former member of the 385th Bomb Group of World War II who had heard about the reunion. The 385th Bombardment Group (Heavy) flew B-17's from Great Ashfield Air Base in Suffolk, England from June 1943 to August 1945. The Group included four bomb squadrons, the 548th, 549th, 550th, and 551st. All four of these squadrons eventually provided heritage to strategic missile squadrons of the 1960s. Another surprise was a Sunday morning contact with a previously unknown 548th member, Tom Stocker, who lives in Carbondale, KS. He had read the newspaper article in the Saturday edition of the Topeka Capitol Journal and came to the Hospitality room for a visit Sunday morning.

As part of the reunion, the former members of the squadron completed the organization of the 548th Strategic Missile Squadron Association. Don Peoples was elected as the "Commander" of the association. He will be assisted by Stan Bielecki who will be his Deputy. Jack Roberts will be organizing and publishing the association newsletter. Warren Shane will become the association treasurer. At the conclusion of the very successful reunion, tentative plans were made to meet again in 2006, perhaps at the AAFM National Meeting. *Don Peoples*

COMMANDER'S BRIEFING

I may be a little prejudiced since I organized the first 548th reunion but it appeared to me that all attendees had a wonderful time. I could not believe that everything went so well. Of course the people that volunteered their time to help with various duties contributed to the success of the event. One thing that could have been better was the attendance; it would have been great to have all the reunion fun and excitement enjoyed by all 300 members that I had spoken to over the last few years.

Several folks inquired about how the finances for the reunion would work out. At that time I wasn't sure since the hotel charges were not yet complete. I'm pleased to say that as it turned out, our treasury got a boost. The hotel fees were a little less than expected and the sales of shirts, CD's, pins, and patches kept us in the black. **See the financial report in this newsletter.**

In our business meeting, we discussed the possibility of having another reunion in the future and all agreed that we should. We did not establish a firm date at that time. We will work out date and location when we get more established. The next reunion would probably be held in 2 to 3 years.

The Jackson Heights High School Community is very proud of their school building, (it is our Site #9), north of Holton, Kansas. During our tour, several members suggested that perhaps the 548th could do something for the school in the future if/when our treasury can afford it.

In closing I would like to thank all who attended the reunion for having confidence in some stranger who called them and suggested attending a squadron reunion. It was a thrill for me to have made so many people so happy during those 5 days.

Tom Musson deserves a special thanks for all his hard work on the outstanding History/Bio booklet that he produced. A sincere thank you to all who volunteered their time to help with registration, hospitality, picking up supplies, door prizes and those who I may not even know about who helped with various chores throughout the reunion.

"Thank You" to all for your work that contributed to the success of this reunion.

I need help in identifying members in reunion pictures. Those who have reunion pictures e-mail or send a Xerox copy with the names of people you know. Thanks!

Don

The Association of Air Force Missileers (AAFAM) will be holding its next meeting in Omaha, May 19-23, 2004. The AAFAM (if you are not familiar) is an

organization of missileers, both retired and active, from all types of AF missile units. Check them out at www.afmissileers.org. or write to AAFM, PO Box 5693, Breckenridge, CO. 80424 They have a meeting every two years. It is always informative and serves to advance the traditions of missileers in all USAF missile units both past and present.



Visiting the missile bay at Ed Peden's site 6. Even with all the visitors, it looked sort of empty.



Ed Peden welcomes the 548th to his site. He has the missile bay front entry door operating, but with an electric motor, not a hand crank!



The entrance to site 9, now a school.

548th SMS Association officers:

Don Peoples, Commander
Stan Bielecki, Deputy
Warren Shane, Treasurer



Charlie Simpson as he delivered the keynote reunion address.



Older, grayer, and maybe a little heavier; but if their country called, these men would gladly do it again!

FROM ACCOUNTING

Financial Statement August 1, 2002 - October 19, 2003

INCOME

Donations	\$ 1070.00
Sales	742.95
Reunion Deposits	1500.00
Reunion Fees	8883.00
Interest	10.32
Association Dues	<u>500.00</u>
Total income	\$12,706.27

EXPENSES

Printing March News letter	\$249.09
Postage	386.99
Web Domain name 3 yrs.	75.00
Reunion Expenses	<u>\$ 10007.54</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 10,718.62

Balance on hand 10-19-2003 \$ 1,987.65

FROM SUPPLY

548th SMS Association Items for sale:

Patches -----	\$ 4.00 ea.
Pins-----	\$ 4.00 ea.
White Visor with a pin attached-----	\$10.00 ea.
CD # 1 **-----	\$7.00 ea.
CD # 2 ***-----	\$7.00 ea.
Bio Booklet -----	\$ 7.00 ea.
T Shirt ...	
only 5 left, 1 S, 3 Med, 1 XXXL-----	12.00ea.

All prices include shipping.

All receipts from sales go to the association treasury.

** CD # 1 = Approx 140 photos of site construction through de-activation, including
base and squadron member pictures.

***CD # 2 = Coming soon! This CD will be pictures taken during the reunion activities. Those folks that couldn't make it to the reunion may want to purchase this CD to get filled in on what we did and who was there.

The pin is a miniature 548th patch about 1" Diameter. If you would like to purchase a hat for \$10.00, (white hat with a 548th patch on the front) I will have more hats made if there is enough interest, let me know if you would like to order one.

Make your checks to: 548th SMS Association

Send your orders for these items to:

Don Peoples

55 Bucknell Avenue

Hamilton, New Jersey 08619-2059

ROLL CALL

During the organizational meeting at which the 548th Strategic Missile Squadron Association was formed, a decision was made to set the dues structure at \$10.00 per member per year. These funds will go for the usual things such as postage, web site maintenance, etc. Some funds will be kept in reserve for assistance in organizing the next reunion.

The membership year runs from January 1 thru December 31 with the exception of this year. This year, dues paid will be good thru December 31, 2004.

As of the date of this newsletter, we have 50 paid-up members. A list of members should be available soon on the web site. www.548sms.com

Remember, to receive future issues of this newsletter, you will need to be a paid-up member.

Make your checks to: 548th SMS Association
Send checks to:

Warren L. Shane

1809 Clarks Street Road

Junction City, Kansas 66441

Do you have any copies of your old orders? These documents or other 548th memorabilia you may have saved could aid us in identifying and locating former 548th members. If you can share copies of these documents, please send them to Warren Shane at the above address.

CHECK YOUR SIX

Have you ever run into somebody you served with in the 548th in an unexpected place at an unexpected time?

Recently, Don Peoples was at an RV club meet when he was introduced to a man by a fellow club member. It turned out that the man was an ex employee of RCA and had worked on the 548th sites before they were turned over to the Air Force. He recounted a story of a glitch in the pressure monitoring system at site 3. It seems that the LO2 pressure would go higher than the RP1 pressure at certain times after a countdown. Now, that would be scary! He said they never did figure out what was wrong, so the AF brass just told them to forget about it!

Can anyone add anything to this?

548TH HISTORY

Help me out with this one. I seem to remember a newcomer's briefing by Sgt. Bounds (1st Sergeant) when I first got to Forbes in which he told us that we were to wear the Distinguished Unit Citation ribbon with one oak leaf cluster. I remember him telling us that the 548th was a re-activated bomber squadron that had earned the citations in WWII and that we were to wear the ribbon to honor the men who were in the original squadron. *Does this ring any bells?*

I never thought much about it until just a few years ago when I decided to mount my old insignia, ribbons, missile badge, etc. in a shadow box and hang it on my office wall.

I did a little research and found that the 548th was first activated as a heavy bomber squadron flying B-17 Fs and Gs in late 1942 and was assigned to the 385th Bomb Group operating out of Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England. This group was cited for raids in 1943 against Regensburg and again for a raid on Zwickau in 1944.

The bomber squadron was deactivated 28 August 1945 and reactivated in the reserve 27 February 1947. It was deactivated again on 27 June 1949. It was officially reactivated as the 548th Strategic Missile Squadron 22 Jan 1960 and deactivated 25 March, 1965. At its strongest, the 548th had almost 600 members and Forbes was the second largest SAC base in the world.

Once again the 548th lies dormant. But who knows? Maybe someday some as yet unborn General may need a good squadron to do a special job and the 548th will again be activated. The name "548th

Special Space Squadron" has a ring to it doesn't it? For more information on the history of the 548th go to:
www.collectorsnet.com/milhist/8thaf/bomber/385bg.H
 TM
 and <http://af.mil/history>.

THE EDITOR'S BRIEFING

I don't know about the rest of the reunion attendees, but I had a great time! Don Peoples did a great job in putting the thing together. He has already thanked Tom Musson and others who assisted. Don't forget Mary Peoples! She worked as hard as anyone!

Naturally, this issue of the newsletter is filled with news of the recent reunion which is as it should be. This was an easy newsletter to put together as Don and others contributed much of the text.

Now it is time to be thinking about the next issue. We have not set a definite time-table for getting out each issue, so I think we may just leave it like this: A newsletter will be published whenever we have some news to spread around or when we need to notify the membership of something special. How's that for a definite answer? Truthfully, I believe once or twice a year should be sufficient.

Now, what should go into a newsletter? Well, you tell me! Of course, the Association officers will be communicating with you through this letter, but this is also your means of communicating with your fellow members, so let me hear from you.

If you have stories about the squadron that you swore never to tell, maybe you should get them off your chest so you can get a good nights sleep after 40 years! How about an entry in the "CHECK YOUR SIX" column telling about running into ex-548th members in unexpected places? How about a column called "THE FUNNIEST THING I EVER SAW WAS....?"

Get the idea? Anything of interest to members. How about the time when the guys were playing around with a ball made with poly and red tape and filled with helium and it got away from them? I know there are hundreds of stories out there.

You can send your stories to me on e-mail at Jack_Roberts_CR4312@Yahoo.com or by snail mail to Jack Roberts, 2175 CR 4312, Campbell, Texas 75422. Don't worry about a polished article ready for print. I'll edit it for you. However, we must reserve the right to trash anything that might be offensive or sensitive in any way.

I'll get you started with a lead-off story:

The mobile maintenance crews used buses for transportation to and from the sites. These buses were old and worn out and not too reliable. We always tried to park our bus high up on the site

somewhere so we could roll it down-hill to get it started.

This particular day, Colonel Clugston, the Squadron Commander, was on site for some reason. One of our specialists was badly needed at a nearby site, so the Colonel told him to take his staff car and he would ride back to the base with the maintenance crew.

Well, the bus did not start, so Sgt. Hall told us to get out and push it. It was a cold, miserable, rainy day and I was pushing on the back of the bus looking down at the ground, when I saw shined dress shoes and dress blue trousers next to me. I looked up and saw a silver bird on the blue shoulder next to my parka. Yep! It was the Colonel, helping to push the bus!

I don't remember ever having a conversation or any other direct dealings with Colonel Clugston, but that day he earned my respect and I will never forget it.

In a few days the old buses disappeared and we got some new four-wheel-drive crew-cab Dodge pickups!

Coincidence? I don't think so!

In a squadron as large as the 548th, there have to be many stories similar to this one. Jot them down and send them in.

David Johnson, our Historian/Webmaster, has our new web site up and running. Check it out at www.548sms.com

Also, try this site:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/missile_talk

You can join this group at no cost and and participate in the discussions.

Did you know that a complete -1 for the F went for over \$500.00 on E-Bay recently?

TAPS FOR 548TH MISSILEERS

Since the first list of former 548th SMS members was compiled, some have passed on. Of course, others will follow. This space will be dedicated to listing those who have become deceased since the last communication.

We need your help in remembering these men. You can help by notifying one of the 548th SMS Association officers if you learn of the passing of one of our members so that their names can be posted here. Please try to provide us with as much information as possible in each case.

Vunkannon, Billy R., TSgt. USAF Served as EPPT on Crew 37 under Capt. Mortimer, later became the squadron NCOIC of Missile Transport. Served on bases in Florida, Thailand, South Carolina, Germany, and Georgia. Retired as SMSgt in 1974.