

Spring
2019

War Eagles Turns Thirty...

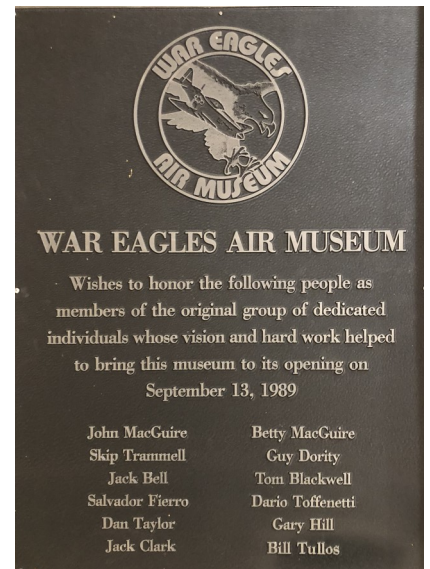


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WAR EAGLES AIR MUSEUM

Bob Dockendorf - Contributing this month - Virgil Hemphill - George Frost - Roger (That) Nichols - Charlie Overstreet
Editor

War Eagles Air Museum started as a dream of West Texas engineer, rancher and oilman John T. MacGuire (1920-2001) and his wife Betty. Pilots themselves, John and Betty began to amass an impressive private collection of warbirds in the 1980s. As the collection grew, the MacGuires looked for a place to build a museum to display their collection to the public. Reno, Nevada, and Las Cruces, New Mexico, vied for the honor of hosting what became War Eagles Air Museum. John and Betty, then living in El Paso, Texas, decided to build the Museum near their home. The Doña Ana County Airport, just across the Texas - New Mexico state line, filled the bill perfectly, even though it was not then very accessible to the public. The only road leading to the airport at the time was rough, unpaved dirt. Work on the 64,000 square-foot main exhibit hangar, a small storage hangar and a restoration shop started in mid-1987. On September 13, 1989, the Museum opened its doors. John and Betty could now see the fulfillment of their long-time dream from their home more than 11 miles away, high on the western slopes of El Paso's Franklin Mountains.



Mark Your Calendars

September 13, 2019

War Eagles Air Museum
will celebrate it's first 30
years

Membership Meeting
And Gala Celebration

All Members are welcome

Looking southeast at the soon-to-be War Eagles Air Museum



Memories of a B-47 Pilot by Charlie Overstreet



five Reconnaissance Wings of SAC. At any given time 1/3 of these aircraft were on 15-minute alert. Fifteen-minute alert meant that all these aircraft would be airborne in that 15-minute time interval.

The B-47 had a length of 107 feet 1 inch, wing span of 116 feet, (the flexible wing would move up and down in a 15/16-foot arc during flight in turbulence) and a height of 28 feet. The empty gross weight was approximately 79 thousand pounds, and design gross weight of 125 thousand pounds. The takeoff gross weight grew to 230 thousand pounds as additional systems and fuel capacity were added. The B-47 was powered by six General Electric J47-25 jet engines. Each engine produced 7200 pounds of thrust with water alcohol injection at take-off. This would not get a combat loaded B-47

Learning the Aircraft

Love it or hate it! The B-47 aircraft was the backbone of the Strategic Air Command strike force from the mid 50's to the mid 60's. A total of 2032 B-47 type aircraft were built by Boeing, Lockheed and Douglas aircraft companies. Approximately 1500 of these aircraft were flown by twenty-eight Bomb Wings and

airborne. It required the additional help of 33 bottles of RATO (rocket assisted takeoff) on an external rack to get aircraft off the ground.

The B-47 was flown by a crew of three. The Crew Commander (pilot), Pilot (co-pilot) and the Radar Bombardier/Navigator. None of the crew could see what the other crew members were doing at their work stations. The safe efficient operation of the aircraft required a high degree of crew co-ordination and trust that each crew member was doing his job.

I entered B -47 training in January 1961 at McConnell AFB, Wichita Kansas. There were 15-16 newly minted pilots in the class. The student aircraft commanders would not arrive for 6-7 weeks, nor would we see the actual aircraft for that period of time. Our classes started with two weeks of special weapons training. We learned how the weapon we would carry operated, what safety systems were employed, what part of the system was in our crew area. We were repeatedly told the importance of the SAC two-man policy and learned and were repeatedly tested on SAC positive control procedures.

We attended classes on basic Celestial Navigation, learned to locate and Identify specific stars and the constellations. How to operate a periscopic sextant and generally how to assist the navigator on celestial navigation legs.

Classes on Electronic Counter Measures and associated equipment began. We learned the sounds produce by hostile

Boeing B-47 Stratojet General Characteristics

Powerplant	6 x GE J47-GE-25 Turbo-jets, 7,200 lbf each
Cruise Speed	557 mph
Maximum Speed	607 mph
Service Ceiling	40,500 ft
Length	107ft 1 in
Wingspan	116 ft
Crew	3
Weight (Empty)	79,074 lb
Weight (Maximum)	230,000 lb

radar systems. We learned the difference between the long-range height finders, the search and lock indication from the surface to air missile, the rapid pulse of the AAA gun laying radar, the quick pulse of the enemy fighter looking for you, and the rapid rattlesnake sound if he found you and was locked on.

Additional aircraft protection was two 20mm radar-controlled guns in the tail of the aircraft. These were part of the co-pilot responsibilities. A radar control head for the guns was located behind the co-pilots seat. Two different types of control heads were used and either one could be on any given aircraft. We had to learn to effectively use both types. We learned how to service the guns if we landed with no support personnel at a foreign airfield.

We attended classes on aircraft systems. hydraulic, electrical, flight controls, fuel control switch positions (all in the crew commander position), air refueling switch positions (all at co-pilots position). Proper fuel tank monitoring was critical as the center of gravity had to be within limits in order to safely fly the aircraft.

Classes in using a load adjuster slide rule for obtaining the correct CG (Center of Gravity) for takeoff, how to calculate fuel usage, use of the performance tables found in the Dash One (the aircraft operating manual) for takeoff distance, airspeed for go/no go, takeoff and assorted other safety of flight concerns were on going.

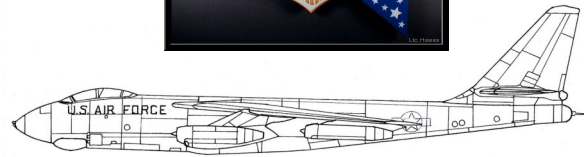
When all of this completed, with testing at every level, the class standing was given. This determined the order in which the co-pilots selected the student crew commander to fly with. This selection determined your B-47 duty station. You would be assigned to the student crew commanders home airbase.

The three-man student crew was assigned to an instructor pilot and the flying fun began. The instructors were experienced pilots with backgrounds as varied as flying WWII bombers to flying transports during the Berlin Airlift.

The new co-pilots first takeoff was in the fourth man's seat in the crawlway, just next to and below the co-pilots position. As the flight continued a series of seat changes would take place and the pilots would occupy their position as needed to complete the required training. The flights would continue to progress with all three student crew members occupying their positions and learning the techniques and procedures that went with successful navigation legs and bombing scores.

With seven months of training completed we departed for our new duty stations. Some of us had to go to Escape Evasion Survival School (three weeks) at Stead AFB outside of Reno, Nevada. We were ready to join our assigned units.

Stay tuned for the summer issue *“Learning the Mission”*



About the Author

Charles (Charlie) Overstreet

Born in 1937

- Married to Mayre Sue for 55 years, have two children and three grandchildren
- Father was an Aviation Machinist Mate
- Graduate of University of Miami with a BBA in Aviation Management
- Entered USAF Pilot training as a second Lt. in 1959
- 1961 – 64 flew in USAF as a co-pilot B-47's
- 1964 – 66 flew B52's USAF
- 1969 Flew 55 missions as a B-52 Flight Commander in Southeast Asia, USAF
- Flew as a Northwest Airlines Flight Engineer
- US Customs Sky Marshall
- US Customs Special Agent Pilot and DEA pilot
- Completed 33 years of government service
- Substitute teacher at EPISD for 17 years
- 2014 became a docent and is now Chief Docent
- Flew 4 of the aircraft on display here (J-4, T-37, T-33, DC-3)
- Consider War Eagles a Dream Opportunity as a Volunteer
- Enjoy traveling and visiting other museums

Virgil Hemphill - Fighter Pilot



Virgil Hemphill at McCord AFB remembering earlier days as a fighter pilot

With spring housecleaning taking place at our house, this photo of a North American F-86D "Sabre Dog" showed-up.

Also, appearing were memories of exciting times of those youthful, "cigar smokin" Fighter Pilot years....this photo was taken at the outdoor museum -McCord AFB, a few years ago while visiting my sister in Washington state. Having been fortunate to fly this model in the USAF in the late 1950's, many things came to mind. Permit me to share a few of them: A brief description of this **all weather** "Fighter Interceptor" would describe it as a single-seat, single engine, radar equipped aircraft with a retractable 24 rocket-pod weapon system. This aircraft had a GE engine

with afterburner & was in the 600mph class, capable of supersonic flight at high altitude with burner on & descending. The mission was a short range interceptor (1 hour without external fuel tanks, & 2 hours with tanks). These planes were based around our major US cities during the Cold War period in the 1950's.

The 326th Fighter Interceptor Squadron that I was assigned to, was near Kansas City, Missouri. Training missions were usually flown with 2 or 3 aircraft & coordinated with large ground radar sites that provided target locations & information via UHF radio. When on "alert status" we were given notice & timed to be airborne. "**Scramble**" was the term used. We would be in the air quickly in 3 minutes or so, usually in a flight of 2.

An event that comes to mind ... coming from these USAF days, is a visit to our Squadron sponsored by North American Aircraft Co. of famous WW II Fighter Pilot, Test Pilot, Demo & Airshow Pilot, the late Bob Hoover. The purpose of Mr. Hoover's visit was to instill confidence & assurance in the F-86D we were flying. These demos were common practice then & were started during WW II. In short, Mr. Hoover was an *aircraft salesman* complete with pilot skills far beyond the average. He showed us the very maximin of what this aircraft would do and how well it preformed! As I recall, he first talked to us, briefing us on what he was going to do as well as various other items of interest coming from his Company. He was loaned one of our regular F-86D's off the flight-line & what followed was very impressive:

- On takeoff, just after breaking ground Mr. Hoover executed a perfect "slow-roll" with gear down in takeoff configuration.
- He made a few passes with the aircraft clean, doing the usual precision airshow maneuvers.
- Climbing out, he then did a 3 turn spin from an altitude of 6,000 feet above ground level recovering with a safe margin.
- Upon landing, he used about (1/3) of the runway distance, turned around took off & returned to land completing the demo.

The 3 turn spin was the highlight of this for me.....we all were very impressed to see what could be done with an ordinary F-86D by Mr. Hoover, one of the best pilots our nation has ever known....

You never know what will come out of "**spring cleaning**" so good luck with yours!

A New Communication Tool

Rio Grande Aviation Council

Thanks in part to the great ideas and suggestions of our friends, a new idea is born. Here is the story; There are so many local aviation organizations, all doing something a bit different, but yet having many similarities in challenges and opportunities. Some of these organizations include the Amigo Airsho, Cielo Dorado HO Association, Civil Air Patrol, Daedalians, EAA Chapters, El Paso Aviation Association, First Aero Squadron, Remote Control Flyers Clubs, Model Airplane Clubs, El Paso Ninety-Nines, QB's, War Eagles Air Museum and more. There is no specific method of having these organizations communicate with each other.

It is proposed to form an informal group composed of charitable, non-profit and/or public service organizations located within a 50-mile radius of the airport to coordinate, promote or support any cause or event chosen by its members.

The War Eagles Air Museum would serve to facilitate the enterprise by serving as the Council's

focal point (sort of an F.B.O.) The meetings could be held at the Museum. The Council would interact with the community through a spokesman, however, the Council would not be a separate legal entity. Any undertaking or transaction would have to be hosted by one or more of the member organizations in the usual way.

The goal would be to wield influence and exert collective bargaining power by virtue of the perception that it embraces a significant number of people. Success would depend on our ability to develop a reputation as an engine for social betterment and economic enhancement of the community. The intent is to pool our resources for greater effect. We could reasonably expect that a council which encompasses the entire aviation community would have considerable prestige from the outset.

The group will meet quarterly on the Saturday following the close of a quarter. So, our first meeting will be Saturday, April 6. Stay tuned for more information.

War Eagles Air Museum is proud to fly "Old Glory" 24 / 7

That means we go through lots of flags because of the desert winds. This past spring and summer has been especially hard on our flags, but we have found a source for long lasting cloth flags (made in America) at a reasonable price. Only one problem They do cost money. Under normal conditions , our flags last for 30 days.

We are now offering monthly flag sponsorship opportunities. Just tell us which size flag you would like to fly and we will fly it with pride and provide honorable mention in your name or anyone for which you wish to dedicate your support.

Here are your options: 3 feet by 5 feet - \$25 (Silver Sponsor)

4 feet by 6 feet - \$30 (Gold Sponsor)

5 feet by 8 feet - \$45 (Platinum Sponsor)

Here is how to help. Just tell the Gift Shop Staff you want to be a flag sponsor. In exchange for your tax-deductible donation we will issue a certificate of appreciation and assign a specific month during which you or your designee will be given honorable mention. **You can make a difference!**

Butterflies... by George Frost

Orange Monarch butterflies in great clouds fly north from Mexico each spring to Canada and the eastern US. Most of us have seen some of them on their journey. They return in fall to winter in forests in Michoacan. There they transform the evergreen trees from green to orange. It takes four generations of Monarchs to complete the yearly trip. They start in one place and return to the same place, year after year. It is an identical complete circuit.

This is about an imaginary butterfly of a different color that most of us have not seen. Its flight is not regular but varies in time and path. It is not visible to everyone. Once you see it, it never completely goes away. It will follow you for life. Unlike the Monarchs it starts its flight in locations all over the world and goes directly to destinations just as varied. Butterflies are rarely seen at a beach but this one has often been seen at beaches. There is no limit to where it may be seen.

Going to the beach as a child is a great adventure. You look forward to it eagerly. You can play in the surf, dig in the sand with your pail and shovel to build sand castles, and stay, not forever as you wish, but until you and your parents are ready to leave. There is no rush to leave and you can hardly wait to return.

There are beaches in Normandy that no one was looking forward to visit on a day in June of 1944. There was no time or possibility to dig in the sand and everyone was eager to leave, but many never did. Most who visited those beaches were not much older than children and many never became any older. It was a beach visit that was absolutely necessary if the world was going to be free of tyranny again.

The sea and the sand had a different color that day. It was red. That day the wind that swept across the sand was filled with lethal bullets from the world's fastest firing machine guns, the MG-42, aimed by soldiers of the Wehrmacht, the German Army. Years later one of those German soldiers who was one of the two survivors of those who defended the beach said "We were all terrified, those crossing the sand, and those trying to stop them. We were all praying while trying to kill each other".

Somehow a photographer with a movie camera had crossed the sand to the bluffs at the edge of the beach and was huddling, sheltered with other survivors. He had his camera and proceeded to film the horror where he had just been. Soldiers were dropping inert on to the sand to never move again. Bits of those films were later often shown in America to speechless viewers. No one would ever relate this to any of their visits to a beach. This was definitely no vacation film.

I had already seen the notice that was sent home to inform you of what happened to your next of kin, a small yellow piece of paper from Western Union and the War Department. My family knew its impact. When I viewed the film showing the scene at Omaha Beach I could see telegrams starting on their journey from the forms on the beach to locations in America and had then seen them transform to yellow butterflies crossing the channel and fluttering on across the Atlantic past the Statue of Liberty to homes in America.

Bedford Virginia had a cloud of those yellow butterflies settle in their town with dreaded news for nineteen families. There were thirty four Bedford boys who visited Omaha Beach that day. Only fifteen crossed to the bluffs and four more of them did not make it through France afterward. Bedford knows the cost of freedom. No one who was on that beach that day wanted to return or remember it, but unfortunately they never could forget the beach, or the cost of freedom.

I don't know if the image of a yellow butterfly is valid for everyone but I see them each time I see an inert soldier on the ground, I don't care whose uniform he is wearing... I see the yellow butterfly. The arrival of that butterfly has the same effect no matter where it lands, or in what language its message is spoken.

Hovering above the vast fields of crosses and other markers of any kind in a military cemetery I see them as a light yellow cloud that flutters into infinity. All of us would like to see those yellow butterflies become extinct and never be seen again. So far that is a wish that has never been fulfilled and is unlikely to ever be fulfilled. Conflict seems to be as inevitable as what occurs in the back seat of your car when you are driving with your children to a day at the beach. Too often conflict that starts at that level reaches infinitely greater intensity and the yellow butterflies are seen flying on their dreaded journeys again.



YOUNG EAGLES
EAA

Young Eagles Rally

Fly an airplane

Located at
War Eagle Air Museum
8012 Airport Rd
Santa Teresa, NM

Free airplane rides for kids ages 8-17
Parent/legal guardian approval and
signature required

First come, first flown
Flights are approximately 15
minutes long

When
13 April 2019
08:00 - 11:00 Weather Permitting

EAA
BY THE WAY OF AVIATION

Mark Your Calendars Now .. Another Young Eagles Event

That's right ... Saturday, April 13, 2019 presents another highlight of our year.

Your local EAA Chapter - 1570 presents a Young Eagles Flying Event right here at the Dona Ana County International Jetport. .

This is a program created by the US Experimental Aircraft Association designed to give children between the ages of 8 to 17 an opportunity to experience flight in a general aviation airplane while educating them about aviation. The program is offered free of charge with costs covered by the volunteers. It was launched in 1992 and, by 2016, has flown more than 2 million children in 90 countries.

Bring the kids and grandkids out to experience aviation at it's best.

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LINEBACKER II – “CHRISTMAS GREETINGS” ...Part 1 of 2 by Roger (that) Nichols

December, 1972 was a festive season for most Americans – Christmas shopping, holiday music, students yearning for their “vacation” within a couple of weeks. If you were at least 10-years-old, you may remember the raging conflict on TV in a far off Asian country thousands of miles to the west – called the Vietnam War. Through a decade of fighting, death, and destruction, there were recent, ongoing negotiations in Paris between Dr. Henry Kissinger, President Richard Nixon’s National Security Advisor, and North Vietnamese Politburo Representative, Le Duc Tho. “We believe ‘Peace is at Hand’ “was announced by Dr. Kissinger, on October 8th, 1972. But it wasn’t to be. The Paris Peace Accords the Americans and the North Vietnamese had tentatively agreed to, did NOT sit well with the South Vietnamese government. The Paris Peace talks broke down, and the North Vietnamese delegation left Paris and returned to Hanoi in North Vietnam. The most devastating bombing offensive of the eight-year struggle was looming – and would be remembered as - LINEBACKER II.

AUTHOR’s PREFACE: This event is one I have not thought much about for four decades. My interest to reflect on it now was sparked by an email that WEAM Docent Mario Campos sent to Chief Docent Charlie Overstreet and me last December. We are old B-52 BUFF (Big Ugly Flying Fellow) Crew Dogs from different eras. Charlie piloted B-52’s in Vietnam in 1969. I was a BUFF Navigator in Vietnam 1971-73. Mario served as a BUFF EWO (Electronic Warfare Officer) later in the 1980’s.

Mario’s email showed a film written and produced by G. Ray Sullivan, Jr., son of the late Brigadier General Glenn R. Sullivan who commanded the 17th Air Division, Provisional, at U-Tapao, Air Base, Thailand in 1972. THIS FILM REALLY TOUCHED MY HEART, and brought back many forgotten memories. I will share Gen. Sullivan’s courageous, heroic actions in Part 2.

Dyess AFB (Abilene, TX) B-52D “BUFF” CREW E-17 “Madison’s Maulers Pig Iron Haulers”... THIS WAS OUR CREW! We were a “family”, and our spouses also remained close while we were away. We flew as a team for two years – from the Fall of 1971 to the Summer of 1973. I was the Navigator... See pic for my crewmates. We spent 520 days on Temporary Duty (TDY) flying combat bombing missions from U-Tapao AB, Thailand, and Anderson AFB, Guam.

LINEBACKER II has been called “The 11-Day

War”, “The December Raids”, and “The Christmas Bombings”. Before I begin this story, here is some historical context.

SHORT HISTORY REVIEW. The United States had been committed to the independence of a free South Vietnam when it was created by the Geneva Conventions in 1954. Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Richard Nixon were committed to this policy. It was the Cold War Era – The Communist Soviet Union and China against the United States and the rest of the Free World. We had taken a stand in Korea, and in other areas to prevent the spread of Communism. When John Kennedy was assassinated Nov. 22th, 1963, Lyndon Johnson would continue this policy of “Containment” against the Soviets and Communist China. My opinion then, as it is now, unlike Korea, is that the Vietnam Conflict was in many respects a nationalist civil war, but Containment and fear of the “Domino Effect” – if South Vietnam fell to the communists, then the other countries in the region were in danger of falling, trumped all other policies. From 1965 on, President Johnson escalated the war gradually hoping, with his persuasive “LBJ treatment” on the North Vietnamese, he could reach a peace deal. Also, he feared the reactions of the Soviet Union and China if he escalated too rapidly. From 1965 to 68’, his strategy failed, and he did not seek reelection. Onto the national and international stage, once again, stepped Richard M. Nixon, the anti-communist Cold War warrior of the 1950’s as Eisenhower’s Vice President. Nixon was elected the 37th President in 68’ with a plan to end the Vietnam War. He brought to office a wealth of foreign policy experience and gravitas. Nixon, with Henry Kissinger’s assistance, cultivated new relationships with the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union while implementing Vietnamization, reducing American troop levels, and destroying enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia. In April 72’ Nixon upped the ante, mining Haiphong Harbor, and ordered LINEBACKER I – the aerial interdiction campaign of bombing enemy sites south of the 20th Parallel to halt the flow of supplies during North Vietnam’s earlier Easter Offensive against South Vietnam. The Goals of the Paris Agreement remained – “Peace with Honor, a stable, independent South Vietnam, and return of American POW’s.”

MORE DRAMA: In October 72’, with Kissinger’s “Peace is at Hand” statement, most Americans were euphoric, as were most of us B-52 crew dogs, but we stayed cautiously optimistic. However with the Peace talks in limbo, and unknown to us crew dogs, Pres. Nixon and Dr. Kissinger wanted to display a “Show of

Force” to convince Hanoi to resume negotiations and sign a peace agreement before January, 1973, close to the terms previously agreed to. Nixon, as later reported, was concerned that the new 93rd Congress reconvening in Jan. 73’ would CUT OFF funding for the war effort. On December 14, Dr. Kissinger, passed the following communique from President Nixon to the North Vietnamese Government, “Return to the Paris negotiations within 72 hours, or face the most grave consequences!” Hanoi did not respond. The feeling was that they would hold out until the spring to get a better deal with the new Congress.

Accordingly, President Nixon directed the reseeded (mining) of the North Vietnamese ports, and ordered the Joint Chiefs to direct the Air Force to plan a major target bombing campaign - a three day “MAXIMUM EFFORT” operation in the Hanoi and Haiphong (port city) areas, which would begin within 72 hours. The night missions would employ ALL 190+ B-52 bombers at Anderson and U-Tapao in addition to F-111 fighter bombers. A-7 attack aircraft and F-4 fighter bombers would fly daytime raids. The use of B-52’s in such large numbers was for SHOCK EFFECT. Pres. Nixon wanted to send a message to Hanoi about U.S. resolve. He felt the psychological impact of the massive bombers silently raining thousands of bombs down from 35,000 feet was as important as its physical destructiveness.

CREW DOG OBSERVATIONS: Although the B-52 air crews were not aware of the extensive planning going on, we saw signs. We weren’t DUMB, and we knew “Somethin’ was up”. We felt it, but didn’t talk much about it. On this TDY, our Crew E-17 was at U-Tapao, and we became acutely aware of the mission stand down from December 14th to the 18th. Crew dogs did notice the bomb loaders were REALLY BUSY at U-Tapao and Anderson loading bombs on MANY B-52’s. Yeah, Somethin’ was really up. We were each quietly and soberly preparing ourselves for something BIG... SOON.



Dyess AFB Buffcrew E-17



Brig. General Sullivan—The “Crew Dogs” Linebacker II Hero!

PART 2 PREVIEW - LINEBACKER II - “CHRISTMAS GREETINGS from SANTA”.

In Part 2, Christmas gifts from Santa would be delivered by way of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) and would arrive early – exactly seven days early. In Part 2, you will read about the gifts the SAC aircrews would deliver, and where they would be dropped off that first night December 18th, 1972. You will read about the first LINEBACKER II B-52 briefings that reminded crews of those dramatic “Twelve O’Clock High” movie scenes where hundreds bomber crews were being briefed prior to the Nazi Germany bombing raids.

You will experience some of the grim, stark highlights from our Crew E-17’s six missions, and other crew’s harrowing exploits from the 11-Day War. On a lighter note, I will share our brief crew meeting at Bomber Ops with the one-and-only - YES, the real Bob Hope, in person, on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24th following his Christmas Show for the Troops at U-Tapao AB.

Finally, the ongoing concern of all the crews about the “flawed” tactics will be aired, and the heroic and courageous actions our commander, Brigadier General Glenn R. Sullivan, recommended which were approved at the highest command levels before the 36-hour Christmas Pause, that positively affected the Bombing Campaign! STAY TUNED to Part 2 this summer.

Meet Calvin Leon Graham

Calvin Leon Graham, the youngest U.S. Service man to fight during WWII. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, he enlisted in the United States Navy from Houston, Texas at the age of 12.

Graham was attending elementary school in Houston before he decided to join the navy, after his father died and his mother remarried. After enlisting in the navy on August 15, 1942 he was sent to boot camp in San Diego, CA for six weeks and afterwards was sent to Pearl Harbor at Oahu, Hawaii where he was assigned to the USS South Dakota.

The South Dakota left Pearl harbor on October 16, 1942. Ten days later Graham participated in the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands. The South Dakota and her crew received a Navy Unit Commendation for the action. On the night of November 14 - 15, 1942, Graham was wounded during the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal. He served as a loader for a 40 mm anti-aircraft gun and was hit by shrapnel while taking a hand message to an officer. Though he received fragmentation wounds, he helped in rescue duty by aiding and pulling the wounded aboard ship to safety. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart Medal and he and his crewmates were awarded another Navy Unit Commendation.

The *South Dakota* returned to the east coast on December 18, 1942, for an overhaul and battle damage repairs (she had taken 42 hits from at least 3 enemy ships) in New York City, and since then, was named "Battleship X" in order to make the Japanese think she had been sunk. Graham's mother revealed his age after he attended his grandmother's funeral (he arrived the day after the funeral) in Texas without permission from the navy, for which afterwards he spent three months in a brig in Texas (he was not released until after his sister threatened to contact the newspapers). Although he had tried to return to his ship, he was discharged from the navy on April 1, 1943, and his awards were subsequently revoked.¹ The *South Dakota's* gunnery officer, who was involved in handling his case, was Sargent Shriver. He then worked in a defense plant as a welder instead of going back to school.



Graham joined the United States Marine Corps in 1948 at age 17, but his enlistment in the Marines also ended early when he fell from a pier and broke his back in 1951. Although serving in the Marine Corps qualified him as a veteran, he would spend the rest of his life fighting for full medical benefits and clearing his military service record.

In 1978, he was finally given an honorable discharge for his service in the navy, and after writing to Congress and with the approval of President Jimmy Carter, all medals except his Purple Heart were reinstated. His story came to public attention in 1988, when his story was told in the TV movie, *Too Young the Hero*. He was played by Rick Schroder.

In 1988, he received disability benefits and back pay for his service in the navy after President Ronald Reagan signed legislation that granted Graham full disability benefits, increased his back pay to \$4917 and allowed him \$18,000 for past medical bills. By this time, some of the doctors who treated him had died and many medical bills were lost. He received only \$2,100 of the possible \$18,000. While the money for the rights to his story for the movie, *Too Young The Hero* amounted to \$50,000, 50% went to two agents and 20% went to a writer of an unpublished book about Graham. He and his wife received just \$15,000 before taxes.¹

Graham's Purple Heart was finally reinstated, and presented to his widow, Mary, on June 21, 1994, by Secretary of the Navy John Dalton in Arlington, Texas, nearly two years after his death from heart failure. He was buried at Laurel Land Memorial Park in Fort Worth, Texas.

Time Travel to 1955 - by Bob Dockendorf

Eventually, one finds out that cars themselves are not the most important thing about the old car hobby. Sure, there are attractive, two-tone paint jobs and lots of chrome, and all sorts of accessories, but it's the memories that end up being most important to some. It's funny though, that for most of us (I hope), the pleasant memories are the most memorable ones. Yes, times were good in 1955. President Eisenhower increased the minimum wage by 25% to a whopping \$1.00 per hour. The prime interest rate was near 3% and money was readily available. And what did we do with all that extra cash? Well inflation was less than ½ %, so that didn't seem to be difficult. The price on a 55 Pontiac Chieftain 870 hardtop was \$2,335 compared to a comparable Chevrolet Bel Air that would have a price tag of \$2,035.

In the spring and early summer of 1955, the hype began. The GM Futureliner buses began their tours to the most prominent dealers showing off the all new lines of GM products for 1955. For months it seemed, while the all new, exciting line of automobiles began to arrive, the dealer's windows were covered to prevent curious, prying eyes from seeing the all new futuristic lines of the latest styling of automobiles.

Word leaked out (probably on a well-planned schedule), about "wrap around windshields" and more bells and whistles than one could imagine. I've been told that Detroit had just started financing cars in a wholesale fashion since they had previously let that up to the banking industry. Suddenly they realized that times were good, money was readily available and the typical American cared more about their monthly payment than the actual price of the car. Dealers seemingly added as many dealer add-ons as Detroit car manufacturers did. One could spruce up their new car with everything from chromed spotlights and mirrors to continental kits, even tissue dispensers, a plug-in baby bottle warmer and a seemingly endless list of more gadgets. Yes, times were good. Salk's Polio vaccine had nearly eradicated polio in the US. The Korean war was over, and we'd never have to worry

Always being fond of nostalgia, I wrote this little piece about my recollection of 1955. It was recently published in the Pontiac / Oakland club monthly newsletter. It's not about aircraft, but is about memories and history - enjoy!



This 1955 Pontiac Chieftain 870 *Catalina* has been in the Dockendorf family for the last 18 years and is our favorite on the road. Fender skirts and curb feelers and more!

about war again (although in November of 1955, the United States sent military trainers to a far-off country called South Vietnam). We all know how that turned out!

Yes, nearly 7 million cars were produced in Detroit for the model year 1955. That was indeed a record year. 1955 produced nearly 30% more cars than the previous year. Once we purchased that shiny new 1955 automobile and showed it off to all our neighbors, we could drive on over to a newly constructed McDonalds restaurant and buy a \$0.19 hamburger. Yes, times were good. So many cars were now on the road that the US had to find a better way to provide the infrastructure to compliment and support all these recently purchased automobiles driven by a whole new breed of traveler by car. 1955 car production required the US to take a new look at our road system and made way for the Federal Highway Act, a bill that created a 41,000-mile national system of Interstate Highways. From that year forward, it seemed that Route 66 was doomed. Too bad!

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