



1st Pursuit Group

1st Fighter News



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USAF DEACTIVATES 71ST FIGHTER SQUADRON



“IRONMEN” HERITAGE LIVES ON IN 1ST FIGHTER ASSOCIATION

This Newsletter is dedicated to the 71st “Ironmen” who are in the deactivation process which will be complete by 1 Oct 2010. During the week of 14-20 June the Squadron, led by L/C Joel “Knuckle” Cook, hosted over 120 past, present and Ironmen friends as they commemorated over 34 years of proud history flying the F-15 A,B,C,D aircraft.

I am proud to say that your Association played a key role in the planning, fund raising, and execution of many of the events. We had eighteen members, family, and guests of the Association in attendance. Members from all three Squadrons and the Association itself contributed over \$5000.00 to help offset the cost of some activities and two of our members, P.E. “Mac” MacAllister and Ralph Wetterhahn were featured speakers at the OPS/MX dinner and banquet respectively. Besides Mac we had two additional WWII 71st veterans, Bernie Muldoon and Eugene Pillard, in attendance. Every where our WWII guys went they were recognized for their service and dedication. They certainly represented our Association superbly.

Included in this commemorative Newsletter are articles and photos covering all the events of the Reunion and Farewell. Additionally, our webmaster was present to document events with video and it will be loaded on the website, 1stfighter.org, as soon as we recover the site from damage done by hackers. Do not miss the video that Bob Correia put together on the history of 71st aircraft and warfighters. I am sure many of you, from all generations, will recognize many familiar faces and nose art.

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In Memoriam

Dick Bachmann	27th
Roy Russell	71st
Ray Smythe	27th

RACQUET'S REMARKS

A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since our last Newsletter and I am pleased to report that our Association is robust with continuing membership growth and with increasing interface with the 1st FW on various projects. Your Association is in a transformation period due to membership growth and more active involvement with the 1st Wing. Of course the big event in the last quarter was the formal announcement by the USAF that the 71st FS would retire their flag at the end of Sept 2010. Once the announcement was made Pete Marty and I met with the current Squadron Commander, L/C Joel "Knuckle" Cook, to see what support we could lend to the planning and execution of retirement activities scheduled to occur from 14-21 June 2010. As you will soon recognize, our Association made a very significant contribution to the success of this event, I will let the numerous articles and pictures speak for themselves as they describe the extent of involvement that the Association had in making this event truly memorable. As a sidebar to the Association involvement, many former 71st SQ non-members and their active duty brothers became aware of the Association and the traditions that we guard so judiciously. Overall we saw a net gain in membership because of our pro-active involvement in participation in this event; Pete will let you know our official membership status in his report.

Our success in supporting the 71st activities would not have been as successful if all three Sqs had not stepped up to plate led by Jon Goldenbaum and his "Ironmen" who led the other two squadrons [appropriately so] in financial support and participation. It was great to see the support from the 27th and 94th also materialize. A special thanks goes to P.E. "Mac" MacAllister and Ralph Wetterhahn for being the "Guest Speakers" at the OPS/MX and Banquet dinners respectively. A special, special thanks goes to Bob Correia who produced an outstanding "71st Tribute" C/D that was the hi-lite of the Banquet closing ceremony and will be available on the website for viewing along with a catalogue of pictures from the event.

Speaking of the website, as many of you are aware, we have had our share of problems initially caused by growing pains as we tried to make the site more responsive to member needs and then the webmaster had to take the site down totally when hackers broke into it and made it totally unresponsive. I have asked Steve "Buick" Olds to give us an update on the status, changes and when we can expect to have our site up and running. Please be patient.

Lastly our congratulations go out to Darrell Welsh on two life changing events in his life: first his recent marriage to Ms Nagy and his successful heart surgery to repair a valve. It is hard to keep a good man down. Once again congratulations Darrell!

Check 6 -- *Racquet*



Once again, P.E. (Mac) Mcallister comes through with an outstanding speech at the OPS/MX dinner



Mac McAllister receiving the "Ironman" award from Lt. Col. Joel Cook

Mac MacAllister Speech Introduction

Pictures say a thousand words and those shown above reflect how well Mac MacAllister's speech was received at the OPS/MX dinner. I thought that everyone should have the opportunity to read his speech so we are printing it here for all to see. Mac's speech was given on 17 June in the Ironmen hangar on the flightline at Langley AFB. This function was really the kickoff of the main portion of the retirement activities and this speech was certainly an appropriate start to activities that followed. The event was attended by both officers and enlisted from the 71st Squadron and 1st Fighter Wing leadership and the Association could not have had a more appropriate representation in that our three WWII Vets were Bernie Muldoon, P-38 pilot, Gene Pillard, P-38 crew chief, and Mac, 71st armament officer. This was a perfect mix and the Association could not have scripted our representation any better. Please enjoy reading Mac's speech although being there in person was really the only way to go.

71st Valediction

By
P. E. "Mac" MacAllister

This final convocation for the Old 71st Pursuit/Fighter Squadron seems compatible with a passage from the Book of Ecclesiastes where Koholeth reminds us that "For everything there is a season; a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck what is planted, a time to kill and a time to heal"; a time to create a Fighter Squadron, a time to retire it. As the oldest surviving Ground Officer, I've been invited to participate in this phase-out exercise by reflecting on the earlier days, including the major military event of my era which culminated 65 years ago. Although that's a long time past, the memory of that experience has faded but never totally departed. I still remember the guys I lived with, the planes we put up, the ordeals and routines of life in the field, the nature of the surrounding culture and, likewise, the oblique connection to that larger element which stationed us in Nouvion or Ain M'Lila; sent us to Biskra or Chateauden Du Rhumel; shipped us to Cagliari or Foggia. Recollections recently refreshed by contemporary historians whose published works provide new insight and detail about our war, and how it was managed.

The 71st Pursuit Squadron was five months old-maybe 50 guys strong when I joined it in May of 1941. By August 30th we were fully staffed for three months of maneuvers. Then off to the West Coast four days after Pearl Harbor where our intrepid Airmen and fierce-some aircraft, single-handedly deterred the Japs from attacking California. Then we were routed to Fort Dix where on June 6th we boarded the Queen Elizabeth bound for Britain. Four and a half months later, we were again afloat, in a 300 ship convoy for destinations unknown but ultimately discovered abruptly on November 8th when we were dumped off, ass-deep in the surf outside Oran, Algeria, welcomed by gunfire echoing all around. "Why I wondered, is the Air Corps in the first wave of an invasion, equipped with 45 caliber pistols and carbines?" Where is the Army, the artillery and the tank corps?" Not here at any rate, and not now, so we waded ashore with a jillion other guys equally confused, half-scared, and baffled by what was happening.

In retrospect, it's a good thing we didn't know what was happening. In a book called "*The Army at Dawn*" we learn the invasion of Oran was carefully planned and assumed to be a piece of cake. Two Coast Guard cutters were commissioned to break the cables protecting the harbor, capture the fort and seize the guns so when the Army landed a couple hours later, they would not be blown away. The Cutters did indeed break the cable but were totally confused about what to do next; were shelled by shore batteries and sunk. The 329 men in the crews were captured or killed, the fort and guns still intact. The whole episode lasted an hour. But not to worry. The infantry that was supposed to be protected never appeared. Vague as to the invasion position; ignorant of the currents, they ended up scattered up and down the beach. No one in this affair did anything right, except the opposing Vichy French. Three days later the infantry arrived replete with tanks, artillery and halftracks. At the same time the French were bought off (by high level negotiations), so we declared a glorious victory and sang a paean of praise to our intrepid heroes. The bungling at Algiers and Casablanca was similar to ours at Oran and became the avatar for the North Africa Campaign. If you doubt it, remember Kasserine Pass six months later providing evidence again of how much we had to learn.

To follow our war, read "*Day of Battle*" which takes the attack next to Sicily and then Italy, recounting the same bungling mismanagement. Typified by George Patton, fighting the Germans in Sicily and unable to move against them, called for a paratroop attack on their rear. Within hours a whole flotilla of DC-3s, loaded with paratroopers, was in the night sky over Patton's area. But George forgot one thing! He never told the Navy they were coming and so Naval guns shot down the entire armada, killing countless hundreds of fine young men. Why he was never court-martialed no one knows. Six months later shift to Mark Clark and his uphill, frontal assaults against entrenched Germans in the Italian mud, typified in his disastrous crossing of the Rapido River in a flood so torrential an alligator would have drowned. Confusion, disaster, death! Or the clever attack ordered by Alexander, which demolished the headquarters of the German staff in Monte Casino, only to learn no German soldier had ever set foot in the building. This was the destruction of an irreplaceable 6th Century, Christian monastery, precious as both a sacred sanctuary and a landmark in Catholic history, a needless desecration, barren of tactical results.

Read "*Retribution*", the latest account of the war against Japan by a British journalist and note the same dreary scenario, generals and commanders who acted on hunches and presumption; taking islands we didn't need (like Leyte or Iwo Jima); under estimating enemy strength and capability; all at inordinate and horrendous cost.

The overarching query in reading these accounts is: "How in the hell did we ever win the war?" And the answer is twofold. America's incalculable productive and logistics capacity: her ingenuity and energy; pouring vast quantities of everything into the battle to assure victory. Secondly, a subtle sub rosa repository of unidentified leadership, judgment, order and intelligence that we usually fixed what went wrong. It is represented in the story of Easy Company, 506th regiment, 101st Airborne Division, and epitomized in Dick Winters who on D-Day morning, 1:00 AM, found himself in Normandy on a critical mission only to discover his Commanding Officer was lost somewhere in the jump. Winters quietly took charge; unfolded maps; got his bearings. Began to assemble a small force, and reviewed the assignment: Silencing the four guns at Brecourt Manor. With an innate gift for command, he ended up recruiting 13 guys; located the guns and the 50 Krauts controlling them, and one at a time directed his men how to attack and when. All four were silenced. (His strategy, formulated spontaneously, is

studied at West Point today as a model for “Seizing a Fixed Position”). Time after time in the months that followed at Carentan and Market Garden, it was his leadership that sensed what to do and his reputation that got it done. In every theatre of war, this same dynamic unfolded. Usually a core of resolution; a group that didn’t panic; saw the hang-up and dealt with it. A corporal or Major or Sergeant who figured out what to do; demonstrated an ingenuity or initiative which was totally absent among the Japanese, rare in German or Russian troops.

I saw this core value of professionalism and ingenuity demonstrated when the Army invaded Salerno in the late summer of 1943 and the Wing sent an Air Echelon to Sicily so we could cover the convoy as it moved our troops into Salerno, back-dooring the Germans. There were maybe a hundred of us in the 71st Squadron including pilots who kept the Luftwaffe off the convoy; got the Army landed; then busted up German camps, tanks, boats, trains, ammunition dumps, anything that moved till the invasion was locked in. Our camp was in an open field with Mt. Etna smoking lazily in the background. Crew chiefs slept in belly tank crates – out next to their planes, which they maintained out of tool kits. Gas was pumped out of drums; bombs were loaded with a hand-cranked winches; guns were reloaded at night by flashlight; faulty radios were repaired on the run; there was much recourse to duct tape and bailing wire. We flew two, three, four missions on a good day; running from pre-dawn till late evening with no landing lights. Fact, I recall loading bombs till midnight. All this lasted just under two weeks and then it was back to camp in Africa. On the flight back I reflected on what these guys had done, with no building, no hoist, jacks, no electric tools or spare parts supply; convinced that Allison could have put 500 men into Catania with trailers, machine shops, and all the maintenance equipment they needed and never gotten the planes in the air we did. Allison had the technology, tooling, manpower; invented the airplane, but there was no way to generate the same sense of mission; accommodation of the circumstances; the same commitment to the cause we had. These were our pilots we were hustling to support and whose lives were contingent on how well we performed. Only those who understood the team relationship could react and respond; those who shared the Squadron culture and its unique ethos.

The undefined but inevitable rapport between pilot and crew was fashioned inadvertently; to me demonstrated after my tent-mate, John-Wiley, was killed on his 49th mission, August 30, 1943. He had made me his “executor”, so I took his wings, wallet and personal stuff back to his Mother. His other bequest consisted of half dozen foreign guns he had collected. His instructions to me (if the worst happened): “Be sure Gig gets one (his armorer); then give one each to the two crew chiefs, one to the radio guy. Wiley had no intention of hauling these back home-but rather he had acquired them to give to his crew before he left, in recognition of what these men had contributed to his safety and well being, he wanted them to realize he was grateful.

There was a certain sense of disorder in our physical arrangement during most of the stay overseas and an uncommon mingling of ranks due to the primitive circumstances. Like eating Thanksgiving dinner at Nuvion, standing ankle deep in mud with a tin mess kit in hand, waiting in a chow line for a succulent serving of steak and kidney pie. No officer’s mess here or enlisted men served over there one chow line. The difference in ranks existed but got buried to some degree by the environment; meaning one shed for showers, one major latrine, each tent like the next irrespective of who lived in it. The officer core became what the Romans call “Primus inter pares”, the first among equals. The major distinction between the fliers and the rest of us was simple. It was the pilot who took the fight to the enemy; he is the one who got shot down or shot up.

Our role as ground crew I think was to provide consistency, order, confidence, proven in soundness of plane and its equipment, allowing the pilot to concentrate on performing his duty. Some of the missions got really crazy. Like bombing Ploesti from Foggia, Italy with P-38’s. Worst disaster in our Squadron history. The mere concept of dive-bombing with no element for accurate sighting; little practice; faulty bomb racks, and no textbook to instruct how it might be done always struck me as pretty insane. “Looked good and might work, but not very often.” Weather was another perennial conundrum and, of course, encounters with the enemy added to the thrill of soaring with the eagles. So our contribution to the dynamic was to provide a dependable, reliable instrument-weapon- in best condition we could make it, equipped with components that function, sights coincident with fire pattern, all controls working effectively. It was to see that while the pilot was fixed on a dozen different things, the one element he did not have to stew about was the aircraft provided for the mission, in a condition of readiness equal to the scope of the task. If outside factors and forces were erratic, the one thing we wanted him sure of was the P-38 did everything it was designed to do.

In reflecting on those days when we were younger and maybe more naïve, there was an element of idealism that seems to say, given the threats to our way of life posed by the Axis Powers, we were where we ought to be doing what we needed to do. Beyond that, as civilians converted to soldiers, were part of the most extensive organizational enterprise ever to be assembled by the human species to fight the most terrible, extensive, and costly of all the wars. The fact that years later we assembled sporadically with those who shared our experience and revisit former times, suggests the enduring nature of the impact, not because victory or the effort, but because of the special group of people who composed our fighting unit and whose combined sense of coordination and effort, multiplied a thousand-fold, determined the outcome. An experience only those few involved with us can appreciate. And remember! The 71st Fighter Squadron may disappear from the current Air Force, but will continue to exist as long as any of us who were a part of her, are still around to remember.



*Symbol of the 71st Fighter Squadron
"Ironman"*



Former (older, but not the oldest) members of the 71st gather for a family photo



Lt. Col. Joel Cook, Col (Ret) Bernie Muldoon, Tech Sgt (Ret) Gene Pillard and Maj. (Ret) P.E. (Mac) MacAllister, a truly handsome group.



Give it a whack! Only the youngest and the strongest could stay on their feet.



Saturday evening Ironmen Farewell Dinner was held at the Virginia Air and Space Center, Hampton. An evening to be remembered.



Lt. Col. Joel Cook and Col (Ret) Bernie Muldoon having a private conversation. What in the world could be so funny?



**COMMEMORATIVE F-15 PLAQUE DEDICATED
AND
71ST WWII DIARY PRESENTED TO THE 1ST FW**

On the second day of formal activities the Association was asked to attend a Boeing Company hosted commemorative F-15 plaque laying ceremony in front of the 1st FW Headquarters building. Following the plaque ceremony attendees retreated from the heat to a reception held in the Wing Conference room, hosted by the Wing/CC, Col Molloy, where the Association presented the original 71st Fighter Squadron WWII diary that Mac MacAllister had been keeping until we had identified an appropriate repository for the document. We asked Mac to present the diary to Col Molloy, 1st FW/CC, for safe keeping. Col Molloy then turned the diary over to the new 1st FW Historian, Brian Leslie, for some minor restoration, safe keeping and display. The Association participation in this event was very much appreciated by the Wing and current Sq personnel for it sustained the heritage of the 71st FS at a time when the Squadron flag was being retired.

Racquet





BURNING THE PIANO

The burning of the piano tradition dates back to the Battle of Britain. A Brit pilot in one of the Eagle Squadrons (US pilots flying with the RAF) was quite the piano player and was popular in the squadron. One day he was killed in action, and the rest of the squadron felt that no one would ever be able to play the squadron piano like him, so they burned it. It is a salute to those great ones who have passed.

This piano was burned at the retirement of the great 71st Fighter Squadron – it passes into history, never to be equaled.

The Air Force might be the youngest of the American military services, but it still has – and holds on to – long running and honorable traditions.



Colonel (Ret) Ralph Wetterhahn receives the Ironman Trophy from L/C Cook

EVENT CLOSING
KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The closing event of this memorable occasion was the formal banquet held in the Hampton Air and Space Museum with cocktails, dinner and keynote speech done under the wings of some very historic aircraft. It was truly a memorable evening that capped off an event that will long be remembered by all who attended.

The hi-light of the evening was, 1st Fighter Association member, Ralph Wetterhahn's [former 71st/CC] riveting account of his planning, participation and experiences while flying the wing of Col Robin Olds [former 71st/CC] during the highly successful "Operation Bolo", the famous Vietnam era Mig Sweep intended to eliminate the NVN Mig threat entirely. During engagements with the Migs, which lasted all of nine minutes, Ralph was credited with an AIM-7 Mig 21 kill, one of seven total jets downed that day, 2 Jan 1967. Look for a total accounting of "Operation Bolo" and Ralph's experiences in our next Newsletter.

Ralph concluded his remarks by detailing some of his experiences traveling the world from Cambodia to the Russian Far East, to Guadalcanal, to the Philippines in search of aircraft wrecks, our nation missing in action, and related, to an enthralled audience, some of the amazing stories his discoveries have revealed. Some of the tales that he spun have been documented on Nova, Discovery and National Geographic Channel, many books, and articles in Air/Space Smithsonian, Military Officer Magazine, Leatherneck and VFW magazines.

Following his remarks Ralph was presented and "Ironman" award by L/C Cook in recognition for his outstanding support and contribution to the success of this event. Thanks Ralph, Well Done!!

Racquet

Website Update

Several years ago the 1st Fighter Association leadership invested significant time and resources to begin the process of developing a multi-role website. The objective was to merge the tremendous history and content developed by our WW2 leaders with more recent eras and future 1st Fighter Wing activities. In order to do so we needed to design a unique website that was capable of supporting a public facing portal with membership restriction, user content input, management controls, social media integration and maximum flexibility for growth.

In the design phase, to keep the costs in line with the budget we used an open source protocol that met our specifications and requirements. Recently we learned that a serious hacker had penetrated the open source code causing substantial chaos. The content of our site is safe, but this has necessitated a substantial rebuild of the site with more secure software. The impact of this has been an extended period of offline status which we expect to be coming to an end in the not too distant future.

Our plan is to meet all of the original specifications plus more that have developed since we started the transition. We apologize for the inconvenience and look forward to having 1stfighter.com up and running as soon as practical.

Steve "Buick" Olds

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BREAKING NEWS - THE WEBSITE HAS BEEN DECLARED "UP AND RUNNING"!

www.1stfighter.com

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Place Stamp Here

