

# 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association Newsletter



27th



71st



94th

Volume 34 No. 1

June 2015

## "Balls 55" Dedication

*Honor the Past While Focusing on the Future*

On February 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing to dedicate the Association-sponsored F-15 static display "Balls 55".

Thursday's activities included dinner for 76 at the Newport News Marriott hotel. Mac McAllister wowed the crowd as the featured speaker.



Deb Mussleman was at the dinner selling lithographs (above).

Friday turned out a crisp sunny day, perfect for the ceremony. The crowd was treated to a number of F-22 takeoffs.

The Association then hosted a barbecue lunch for the airmen who helped make the display a reality donating their time and hard work. After lunch, the Association presented its annual awards the Expeditionary Airman, Expeditionary Officer and Fighter Pilot of the Year.

Later members headed to the 27<sup>th</sup> squadron for Ralph Wetterhahn's Vietnam MIG kill stories and a briefing on the first F-22 combat mission in Syria. The day wound up with a beer call hosted by the 27<sup>th</sup> FS. (Photos page 8)

Save the date!

**2015 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association Reunion  
September 17-20, 2015**

Woodlands Hotel, Williamsburg, VA  
See page 4 for information

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 "Balls 55" Dedication
- 3 In Remembrance
- 4 Photo Request
- 4 Reunion 2015 Fast Approaching
- 6 94<sup>th</sup> Change of Command
- 7 WWII Photo Collection Donation
- 7 Wife's Perspective of Reunions
- 9 "IRONMAN" History (Desert Shield)

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## Sailor's Remarks

See Reunion article on page 4.

Check 6

*Sailor*

## Notes from the Secretary

We are in the final stages of wrapping up the 2015 Annual Dues Campaign. If you haven't sent in your dues please do so ASAP to avoid being dropped from our roles. Currently, the Association has 252 active members of which 84 are Life Members. Special thanks go out to the following who donated to the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association Heritage Fund:

E.D. Shaw III	Deb's Picture This, Inc
Hank Goddard	Mike Oakes
Dave Branks	John Delianedis
Bruce Gordon	Budd Butcher
Bill Goodrich	Arnold Megenity
Scott Seavers	Charles Wilson
Frank Ballinger	Loyd Longenbaugh
Richard Rice	George Wallace

Look for a mailing with the details of the September Reunion and a sign-up sheet in June. Additionally, if you have any inputs for discussion in the General Membership Meeting at the Reunion or would like to volunteer or have a nomination for a board member position please e-mail me with your inputs at [1stfighter@comcast.net](mailto:1stfighter@comcast.net).

I am looking forward to seeing you in Williamsburg at the Reunion.

*Pete*

27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron Change-of-Command for Lt Col Dave Elliott was on May 1, 2015. Full story in the next newsletter.

## In Remembrance

**Herschel Baird** (94<sup>th</sup> Squadron) passed away on January 16, 2015. He served in WWII, Korea and Vietnam.

**Richard L. Maxson** passed away at his home on November 17, 2014, at the age of 94. "He was so proud to have been Crew Chief on the P-38 in World War II (94<sup>th</sup> Squadron). It would have been our 70th wedding anniversary in January." Sincerely, wife Darlene B Maxson

### **DARRELL G. WELCH** 1918-2015

By Sig Christenson and Emily Rodriguez  
Staff Writers San Antonio Express-News

Darrell Welch saw no glory in war, even after shooting down three German planes in a single World War II battle.

If anyone asked him about it, Welch would say he did his duty and that he never shot at people — taking aim instead at a plane's vulnerable point.

"I don't find any great joy or sadness either in fighter planes shooting down people or anything else," he told the San Antonio Express-News in 2006. "War is hell, always has been and always will be, but I had a job and that's what I did."

Welch died January 13 in San Antonio at age 96.

A retired Air Force colonel, Welch was an ace — a pilot who shot down five or more enemy airplanes. He earned a Silver Star for the battle in which he shot down three Junkers Ju 52 transport planes, a mission that saw two other pilots also earn triple kills.

Someone took a photo of Welch and the other pilots with their hands raised, three fingers in the air, but he didn't brag about it. He wrote matter of factly about the air battle, which ended with a pair of P-38 Lightning fighters

driving off a pair of enemy planes that had badly shot up his plane.

"Today I'm an ace," Welch said in a pocket diary. "Squadron got 16 enemy aircraft destroyed. Lost Hilgert and Field. We found over 50 Ju 52s, I got three, Newby one Ju 52, two Ju 87s. McKay three, Bancroft two, Shaw two, Rush one, Loder one, Anderson one. I got shot up a little by Me (Messerschmitt) 109."

Flying became a passion for him after his first flight.

"He had never been in a plane, but there was a barnstormer in Odessa and he spent five whole dollars to go up and see what it was like to fly. He never looked back. He loved flying," said his daughter, Ginny Welch Dameron, 60, of San Antonio.

Welch was having brunch with his fiancée's grandparents when he learned of the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. He got in his car and sped to Michigan to meet his squadron, only to find that they were already gone.

A single fighter plane was left for Welch to use to meet them on the West Coast for their next assignment, which led to a flight that is talked about to this day, his family said. His journey west took him through Midland, where he grew up, so Welch decided to make a detour to give his family a show before his next assignment.

"These giant oil tanks were all in a row, he was flying along at 10,000 feet when he was hit with an irresistible urge," said his son, Darrell "Buck" Welch Jr., 69, of Honolulu. "He rolled over and went down to the ground and proceeded to fly between the tanks in the farm."

Tired of flying between the tanks, Welch circled the 12-story Petroleum Building, a Midland landmark, causing a stir throughout the city. Years later, townspeople talked of how low to the ground his plane was as he flew past.

Daring was a part of his style. In shooting down his first plane on March 23, 1943, a Messerschmitt 109 flown by Lt. Wolfgang Dreifke, Welch and his wingman turned straight at the fighters, a tactic pilots deemed a risky best option.

As the Me (Messerschmitt) 109 passed, its engine smoking, Dreifke climbed out of the cockpit.

A portrait by Roy Grinnell, "A Deadly Game of Chicken," captured the moment.

"Rough day today," Welch wrote in his pocket diary, noting that one American pilot was shot down. "The Hun really wanted to play."



John Davenport / San Antonio Express-News

Colonel (retired) Darrell G. Welch, 96, was one of the few remaining flying aces in San Antonio, with five air victories against the Germans in 1942. Welch died Jan. 13.

## Photo Request

The Association received the following request:

"This is a shot in the dark request. I was stationed at HQ TAC/SC (A6) at Langley AFB during Desert Shield/Desert Storm and I'm looking for Langley AFB photos during that timeframe.

Would your association or any member have archive photos from August 1991 to February 1992 – I'm interested in the area around the Langley Air Base Officer Club parking lot

near the Langley Air Force Base Memorial Park. Specifically photos that included the large, ugly satellite dish. I had a hand in the decision to place it there :) so I'm trying to recapture the moment.

Sincerely,  
Daniel W. Henkel, Col USAF (Ret)  
757-871-7606 dwhenkel@hotmail.com

## Reunion 2015 Fast Approaching

You only get a chance like this every two years, don't miss out on being part of the best memories that will be formed during our gathering at the Woodlands Hotel in Colonial Williamsburg, VA on 17-20 Sept 2015.

Registration is well under way and the rooms are filling up fast. Room rate is \$129. Includes breakfast and parking is free.



To book your room - Use the Hotel PASSKEY system: <http://resweb.passkey.com/go/36577>

or call: 800-261-9530 Monday thru Friday and mention ID 36577

**Thursday** afternoon/evening is to meet old friends in the Hospitality Suite and a buffet dinner at the Williamsburg Woodlands Conference Center, a five minute walk from the hotel.

**Friday** – Plan on taking a bus to Langley to see the "Balls 55" F 15 memorial, view an F-22 Demo flight or visit the simulators, have lunch and a membership meeting at the "O" club, and then we have been invited to the 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron for a round of drinks and war stories with the pilots & maintainers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing. That evening will feature a really

outstanding seafood buffet at the Williamsburg Lodge, a 10 minute ride from the hotel.



**Saturday** – Plan on spending the day in Colonial Williamsburg Historic area. We get a special rate pass for \$20.00 (normal price is \$45) and the pass is good for every day you stay at the hotel. You may also be interested in taking a different path and visit Busch Gardens or Water Country only minutes from our hotel or tour Jamestown or Yorktown only 20 minutes away. If you have not been to these historic sites in recent years you will be pleasantly surprised by many new events and museums that take you back to the founding fathers and the beginning of our country. That evening will be a sit down dinner banquet in the conference center.

**Saturday night's** banquet speaker is General William R. Looney III, former 1<sup>st</sup> FW Wing Commander and member of the 94<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron. The banquet promises to be another memorable 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association occasion.

The Hospitality Suite will be open every afternoon and evening. I hope to see you all there and remember to invite a friend from the past, they don't need to be a member to come to the reunion! Once they see what this association is all about, the membership choice is a no brainer and we can take care of that paperwork in the hospitality room in about 2 minutes.



(Photos are of the hotel.)



### **“Hat in the Ring Gang” Change of Command – March 6, 2015**

Lt Col John R. Echols was born in Albuquerque, NM on 29 July 1977. After graduating from Ruidoso High School in 1995, he attended the University of New Mexico and was commissioned upon graduation in 1999. He graduated from Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training at Sheppard AFB, Texas in 2000; and in 2001, was a distinguished graduate of the F-15C Basic Course at Tyndall AFB, Florida. In 2002, Lt Col Echols was assigned to the 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Langley AFB, Virginia.

While assigned to the 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Lt Col Echols worked first as a scheduler, then in Weapons and Tactics at the squadron and wing levels. In 2004 he transitioned from the F-15C to the F-22 as one of Langley's initial cadre of Raptor pilots, but remained in the 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron – the Air Force's first operational F-22 squadron. During this assignment, he served as the chief of F-22 Standards and Evaluations for 27th Fighter Squadron and the 1<sup>st</sup> Operations Group.

In 2007, Lt Col Echols was assigned as an instructor pilot at the USAF's only F-22 Formal Training Unit, the 43<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Squadron, Tyndall AFB, FL. During this assignment he served as Chief of Weapons and Tactics, Flight Commander, and Assistant Director of Operations. As the 325<sup>th</sup> Operational Support Squadron's chief of training, he was responsible for developing the first F-22 Basic Course syllabus.

From 2010 until 2011, Lt Col Echols attended, and was a distinguished graduate of Air Command and Staff College and the Political Affairs Strategist course at Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

In 2011, Lt Col Echols was assigned as a Political Affairs Strategist and Joint Campaign Planner at Headquarters, North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command, Peterson AFB, Colorado. He was the commander's lead planner for Countering Transnational Criminal Organizations and was named the command's Field Grade Officer of the year in 2011. He later served as executive officer to the NORAD/USNORTHCOM Chief of Staff.

In early 2013, he returned to the cockpit, again assigned to Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, initially serving as the Director of Operations for the 1<sup>st</sup> Operational Support Squadron. Since November 2013, he has been the Director of Operations for the 94<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, the legendary "Hat in the Ring" gang.

Lt Col Echols is a Senior Pilot with over 1600 fighter hours in the F-22 and F-15C. He has flown and led combat missions over Iraq, homeland defense missions over the US, and is fortunate to have been part of many "firsts" in the F-22 program. His military decorations include the Joint Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Commendation

Medal, and Joint Service Achievement Medal.

## World War II Photo Collection Donated

By Joshua Lashley, 1 FW Historian



On 16 April 2015, the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association finalized the donation of a WWII Photo Collection to the 94<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, one of the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing's F-22 combat squadrons. The collection of photos belonged to Jim Bertoglio, the 94<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron photographer in 1944 and 1945. Bertoglio's photos chronicle the life of the squadron as it operated throughout Italy in the later years of World War II. Capturing everything from aerial photos and maintenance work, to morale and welfare of the Airmen, the photos serve as a unique snapshot into wartime life and the history of airpower. The 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing Commander, Colonel Kevin A. Huyck, and the Vice Commander, Colonel Jonathan M. Letsinger, accepted the collection on behalf of the deployed 94<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron. The "SPADS" intend to make sure this important piece of squadron history is appreciated and utilized to display their proud heritage.



In the photos, Jim Hardenbrook, Col Huyck, Col Letsinger, Pete Marty and the author.

## Wife's Perspective 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron 2014 Reunion

By Elizabeth Dodge

At the last reunion of the 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Mike "Sailor" Frankel asked me to write something about attending the reunion as a spouse. I said "sure" and promptly forgot about it. But the F-15 static display dedication at Langley on February 6<sup>th</sup>, and the reunion coming in the fall, made me think of what I wanted to say to those who have never attended one.

After Randy and I were married in 2003, he became active in the group and went to the gatherings by himself. He was always urging me to attend and talked about everyone bringing their girlfriends, wives, and adult children to the reunions. I finally capitulated in the autumn of 2011 which was in Riverside, California. The dates fell over my birthday and I was not really looking forward to spending my birthday with a bunch of people I didn't know! It turned out to be a wonderful venue and a great group of people. Everyone was so friendly and I made some interesting acquaintances that have developed into lasting friendships.

The World War II guys were the best surprise! They were such amazing people and had such great stories! I loved the way all the guys made

sure they got up in the airplanes at the “Planes of Fame Museum” and were excited to tell me about their experiences. They are truly the greatest generation.

I have enjoyed taking photographs of our trips and my husband Randy shares them on the I Honor the 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron Facebook page. We have lost a few of the members since that time in California, most recently Darrell Welch. It was a privilege to meet him and his family.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron reunion last September in Oklahoma was excellent! Wendy and “Stick” Drummond were fabulous hosts and we had a wonderful time at their lodge, home, and ranch. They even helped me celebrate my birthday at their house during dinner that night. Having never been to Oklahoma, I was awed by the beauty of the plains. The dinners, dancing, and the ranch were spectacular!

My message to anyone who has never attended, or hasn’t attended a reunion in a long time is, please reconsider!! Everyone goes out of their way to make you feel welcome, and there are many fun activities to participate in. Give it a whirl!



### “Balls 55” Dedication Photos



Website: <http://www.1stFighter.com>



# 71<sup>ST</sup> TACTICAL FIGHTER SQUADRON

## “IRONMAN” HISTORY

### “DESERT SHIELD”

#### Preface

These are some of the highlights of the first few days prior to deploying to Saudi Arabia for Desert Storm/Shield. The Ironmen deployed on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1990 and returned 7 months later on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 1991. Although, things probably went as smooth as might be expected at the time it seemed pretty unbelievable that the 71<sup>st</sup> almost missed the boat when it came to showing up prepared to go to War. Thanks to our Squadron Intelligence Officer (Truckster) we were able and ready when the time came. These are but a few of the highlights that I documented in the 7 months of Desert Storm/Shield as the Squadron Commander.

Pipper



#### By LTC “Pip” Pope

*“ONCE AN IRONMAN ALWAYS AN IRONMAN”*

**2 August 1990 – 7 Aug 1990**

#### 2 AUG 90 0530 (THU)

**KUWAIT:** In a BLITZKREIG like fashion, more than 100,000 Iraqi troops overrun Kuwait City and strike out toward the Kuwaiti oil fields.

**IRAQ:** President Saddam Hussein said, “The attack was support for a coup by the provisional government of Free Kuwait.”

**USA:** President Bush denounces the attack and freezes Iraqi assets.

**USSR:** Iraq’s weapons supplier suspends weapons deliveries.

**ARAB WORLD:** Arab leaders seek U.S. restraint while they search for an Arab solution.

**LANGELY AFB:** 71<sup>ST</sup> SQ CC, LTC Pope recalled by the Wing for a battle staff meeting. Subject: Lightning Recall regarding the invasion of Kuwait. A situation update was presented by Wing Intel. The Wing CC directed the 71<sup>st</sup> to put all Lightning players on crew rest immediately and alluded to the fact that there was more than just a little confusion on exactly what plan we were going to deploy under.

LTC Pope gathered all 71<sup>st</sup> personnel in the main briefing room and relayed the Wing CC directive as well as the current situation as it was known.

By 1130 hrs all the pilots had been selected and departed for quarters and the remaining squadron personnel began preparation for a Lightning deployment to the Mideast, location TBD.

### **3 AUG 90 (FRI)**

**KUWAIT:** Iraqi troops continue pushing south through Kuwait to the Saudi Arabian Border.

**IRAQ:** Saddam announces they would begin withdrawing troops.

**USA:** Several congressmen call on President Bush to "Draw a Line in the Sand"

**ARAB WORLD:** The Arab League votes 14-0 (7 Nations abstained) to denounce Iraq's conduct.

**LANGELY AFB:** The squadron remained in crew rest, no words, no info, no nothing; CNN/TV is the only source of information.

The Wing DO called and suggested the SQ CC/DO talk with the 27<sup>th</sup> Sq CC, LTC Carbo Kline, since he had completed a tour in Dhahran and might be able to provide some information we could use. LTC Pope and LTC Griffin meet with LTC Kline and get what information we can regarding the base and it's layout along with any other info he thought might be useful.

### **4 AUG 90 (SAT)**

**KUWAIT:** A provisional government is installed, but all cabinet members are Iraqi's.

**USA:** President Bush steps up efforts to cut off Iraq's oil pipelines through Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The European Economic Community joins the U.S. and imposes trade sanctions against Iraq.

**ARAB WORLD:** The Arab summit meeting falls apart with no further action planned. Jordan's, King Hussein defends Saddam Hussein's actions and calls him a patriot.

**LANGELY AFB:** The 71<sup>st</sup> remains in crew rest, however, no info with regard to what is being planned.

LTC Pope calls the Wing DO to advise him he was bringing in the pilots for an intel update at 0900 Sun. The Wing leadership will be there.

### **5 AUG 90 (SUN)**

**KUWAIT:** Reports of Iraqi troops looting in Kuwait City, U.S. reconnaissance satellites show Iraqi reinforcements moving into Kuwait.

**IRAQ:** Again, Iraq announces they are withdrawing troops from Kuwait.

**USA:** President Bush vows that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait "Will not Stand"

**ARAB WORLD:** King Hussein asserts that Iraq's president told him he would not invade Saudi Arabia.

**LANGLEY AFB: 0900 HRS.** Wing Intel presents the situation update. The Wing CC gives his assessment of what's going on and where we stand. At the conclusion the Lightning boys head back into crew rest and quarters by 1200hrs. LTC Pope informs the Wing DO that there has been no preparation for this deployment and we need to get into the squadron and do some preparation and study. He plans on bringing everyone in on Monday AM unless told otherwise.

### **6 AUG 90 (MON)**

**KUWAIT:** Iraqi troops begin rounding up hundreds of foreigners and transporting them to Iraq. 39 Americans are in that group.

**IRAQ:** Saddam Hussein now vows to hold on to Kuwait. In Baghdad he is providing civilians with weapons.

**UN:** The Security Council imposes arms and trade embargos against Iraq.

**USA:** President Bush proposes a multinational Naval force to enforce the embargo.

**DESERT SHIELD:** There is now a name for this operation, Desert Shield. Secretary of Defense Cheney visits Saudi Arabia to discuss defensive options. The Saudi's request U.S. assistance.

**ARAB WORLD:** The Palestinian Liberation Organization Leader Yasser Arafat calls on Egypt's President Mubarak to support Iraq. Egypt mobilizes it's military, but does not state who it is supporting.

**LANGLEY AFB:** The Lightning pilots begin detailed study of South West Asia, the threats and the entire spectrum of what might be expected in this deployment. The Squadron is still under the impression that if we deploy it will be a Lightning Package, i.e., 8 planes and pilots.

**2030 HRS.** The Wing DO calls LTC Pope at home and informs him that the Wing is being recalled and that the entire 71<sup>st</sup> pilot continent is to stay at home in crew rest. LTC Pope informs the Squadron to stay in crew rest and that only essential personnel are to report for work the next day.

### **7 AUG 90 (TUE)**

**KUWAIT:** Iraqi ground forces expand to 120,000, with hundreds of tanks.

**IRAQ:** Saddam continues to vow to hold onto Kuwait, stating: "We would rather die than be humiliated."

**USA:** The President orders ground and air forces to Saudi Arabia as part of a multinational force.

**DESERT SHIELD:** F-15'S deploy from Langley AFB and the USS Saratoga Battle Group leaves for the Middle East.

**LANGLEY AFB:** AT 0230 hrs the Squadron Intelligence Officer calls and tells LTC Pope they need to meet. At LTC Pope's quarters the Intelligence Officer informs LTC Pope that the deployment will not be a Lightning Package as planned, but the entire Squadron and the first chock time in 1130hrs. LTC Pope and LTC Griffin immediately begin to replan the deployment to include the entire squadron. A recall is initiated at 0400 hrs with all the deployment changes in place. At 0500 the Wing DOX calls and tells LTC

Pope that there has been a change to the deployment plan and the he might need to reorganize the pilot deployment roster. YGBSM! Thanks. At 1030 hrs LTC Pope calls LTC Smith, 94<sup>th</sup> CC, who is working in the command post, to find out what is going on. LTC Smith informs LTC Pope that the entire squadron is being deployed and the deployment briefing is scheduled for 1330hrs. LTC Smith thought the information had been passed along. Well not exactly!



At 1300 hrs everyone shows for roll call except one pilot who was late getting the word, he arrives late but gets the essential information.

The briefing begins at 1330hrs, it lasts 20 minutes. It took 3 days to prepare and this is the first time we get to hear any of it. The briefing is fairly complicated, but there are not a lot of questions to be asked because there is no time to ask them.

We step to our jets and strap in and are promptly put on a 30 minute hold as a result of the tankers having problems. Finally, we take off (1730 hrs) for the midnight ride to sand land. We deploy in 4 cells of six aircraft, thirty minutes apart, loaded for bear, 4 x 4 x guns. LTC Pope, Capt Kennedy, LTC Griffin, and Capt Chapman are the cell leads. It's going to be a long ride, but we're finally enroute!

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Place stamp  
here