

## ASSOCIATION

### A HISTORY OF PACCS, ACCS AND ALCS

#### Part 2

Greg Ogletree  
Association Historian

On 1 July 1966, the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (55SRW), based at Forbes AFB, KS, assumed responsibility for **LOOKING GLASS** from the 34th Air Refueling Squadron (34AREFS). Detachment 1 of the 55SRW, based at Offutt AFB, NE, actually conducted flight operations for the Glass. About a month later, the wing headquarters was moved to Offutt. At that time, **LOOKING GLASS** operations were transferred to the 38th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron (38SRS), whose responsibility was to fly the five EC-135C's in support of the SAC ABNCP mission. (Editors note: The 38SRS also continued to conduct certain specialized reconnaissance missions, which had been performed by the 34AREFS, utilizing three KC-135A aircraft, which were modified for receiver refueling and for the reconnaissance functions. These were designated as KC-135R's, not to be confused with the re-engined tankers of the 1980's, which are currently known as KC-135R's.)

By the mid-1960's, improved accuracy of Soviet ballistic missiles was increasing the vulnerability of buried Minuteman launch control centers (LCC), so the Airborne Launch Control System (ALCS) was created to provide a survivable launch capability for our country's ICBM force. The first attempted launch of an ICBM (Minuteman II) by means of ALCS was successfully conducted at Vandenberg AFB on 17 April 1967. Initial operational capability was achieved on 31 May 1967 and the ALCS was eventually installed aboard all PACCS aircraft assigned to Ellsworth AFB and Minot AFB, as well as on **LOOKING GLASS**. Full operational capability was reached in June 1968. The

ALCS crews at Ellsworth were assigned to the 68th Strategic Missile Squadron and the crews at Minot were under the 91st Strategic Missile Wing. On 1 February 1974, the first SELM (Simulated Electronic Launch-Minuteman) (Giant Pace 74-1) was completed. Eleven SELM-configured Minuteman II ICBM's at Ellsworth AFB underwent successful simulated launch on command by the two test LCC's, as well as from the ALCC. The ALCS was modified in the early 1970's to incorporate increased safeguards against unauthorized ICBM launch or accidental compromise of launch codes. The improved weapon system was called the "Phase II" ALCS.

The PACCS was again reorganized on 1 April 1970. The EC-135's were moved out of Westover, Barksdale and March AFB's to reduce their vulnerability to short notice attack warning. In this reorganization, all EC-135's were assigned to the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Airborne Command and Control Squadrons (ACCS), which were activated at Offutt, Grissom and Ellsworth AFB's respectively. At this same time, PACCS crews and aircraft, assigned to Minot, also moved to Ellsworth...although, two Ellsworth sorties deployed to Minot for alert duty on a rotational basis. Although PACCS aircraft were now stationed in the central United States, rather than around the periphery, the basic function of PACCS remained unchanged. **LOOKING GLASS**, continued to remain airborne in the vicinity of Offutt. The auxiliary airborne command post, ALCC and relay aircraft remained on round-the-clock ground alert, ready for immediate launch. To consolidate resources, SAC reorganized PACCS again in 1975. The 3rd ACCS was inactivated after its functions had been assumed by the 70th AREFS at Grissom and the 2nd ACCS at Offutt. (To be continued)

### CAN YOU TOP THIS?

The personnel who manned **LOOKING GLASS** were fully aware of the awesome responsibilities which were involved in their mission. As Airborne Emergency Actions Officer (AEAO), each general officer who flew on the Glass, would have assumed direction of SAC forces in the event that the underground command and control capabilities at Offutt AFB were put out of service or seriously degraded. There are two instances in which a father and his son both served as AEAO during their SAC careers.

LtGen James Keck  
BrigGen Tom Keck  
BrigGen George Cole  
BrigGen George Cole, Jr.

### SQUADRON INSIGNIA

Your editor is looking for insignia of the various squadrons which were involved in SAC PACCS, ACCS and ALCS operations. What we need are graphic illustrations which can be copied for reproduction in this newsletter. They will be used in various ways, in the future, to help in telling the stories of the units, their people and their missions. Included should be all of the flying squadrons

- ✓ 32AREFS ✓ 34AREFS
- ✓ 99AREFS ✓ 913AREFS
- ✓ 906AREFS ✓ 38SRS
- ✓ 2ACCS ✓ 3ACCS ✓ 4ACCS
- ✓ 4362PACCS ✓ 4363PACCS
- ✓ 4364PACCS ✓ 4365PACCS,

all of the various Comm Squadrons and Maintenance Squadrons, etc. For the time being, at least, we are interested in keeping this at squadron level, without getting into insignia at Wing or HHQ level.



**THE 1996 REUNION**

Here is the tentative program for the 1996 reunion to be held at the Omaha Marriott, Omaha, NE.

- Wed, 2 Oct Evening Get-together  
No-host Bar
- Thu, 3 Oct Morning/Afternoon  
Offutt AFB Tours,  
including underground  
Evening Buffet Dinner
- Fri, 4 Oct Golf at Offutt AFB  
Free Day for non-golfers
- Sat, 5 Oct Morning Membership  
Business Meeting  
Evening Sit-down  
Dinner and Dance
- Sun, 6 Oct Morning Brunch  
Offutt AFB Clubs  
Memorial Service  
SAC Chapel

Registration will be held at appropriate times each day, as required.

Hospitality Room will be open each day and evening, except during the scheduled evening activities on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday.

We will be sending out Reunion sign-up paperwork with the next newsletter. Firm commitments with payments will be required when signing up for the reunion and for the various events in which you wish to participate. This is necessary in order to make firm commitments and advance arrangements, where required.

The Saturday Business Meeting will have an important bearing on the future of the Association. Among items to be discussed and/or decided:

- *A Slate of Officers for the Coming Year(s)*

Your Steering Committee has, since 1993, collectively and individually, devoted a great deal of time and effort into getting the

Association going. It is now time for an infusion of new blood, new ideas and sharing the load.

- *Venues for Future Reunions*

Colorado Springs looks like a likely prospect for 1998, but decisions must come from the membership.

- *Membership Numbers*

How many members must the Association have to be a viable organization? Will the current membership level support the goals of the Association? The answers to these will have a bearing on future actions in regard to **dues, finances, incorporation, tax exempt status, etc.**

**Start making your plans now to attend the second reunion of ACCA.**

**WAR STORIES DEPARTMENT**

(Editors Note: There must be hundreds of interesting stories out there about your thrills and chills in the airborne command control system. Send them in. They may be edited a bit, for space available, not necessarily for political correctness, but maybe enough to avoid embarrassment by pointing a finger at someone who may have used somewhat less than perfect judgment in a given situation. The following one was recently received.)

**ONE UNCOMMON DAY FLYING THE GLASS**

Jim Marshall  
MSgt, USAF-Retired

Flying **LOOKING GLASS**, in general, was a fascinating experience...like watching the sign posts for Lamoni, Saint Joseph and other towns click by at regular intervals. Being an instructor Boom

Operator made it even more interesting, hours of sheer boredom, with never a hook-up, just feeling that coffee ferment. (But, wait ... things do get more exciting on the Glass.)

One April morning, at 34th AREFS Operations, we were doing our Standboard thing when the Ops Officer dropped in. He stated, "The Midnight Looking Glass is being pre-positioned to Walker AFB, due to high winds. Get your bags and be ready ASAP. Also, an IP from SAC Headquarters will be flying with your crew."

"Well", I thought, "It might be interesting to see a KC-135 taxi to Roswell, New Mexico, since a look outside showed large portions of Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas flying by at a great rate of speed from the southwest." However, I dutifully hurried home, gathered up my gear, and returned to Squadron Ops to board the crew bus. All this time I was thinking, "This is just another baggage drill. We're not going anywhere today." The wind was noticeably harder and even the crew bus was experiencing turbulence and control problems. It was late morning when we boarded the aircraft with our borrowed IP, and with the battle staff, communicators, steward and flight crew all aboard.

Again, I said to myself, "This is getting to be a bit too much for a baggage drill," as we taxied to the northwest end of the runway. The tower gave us weather and winds at forty, gusting to forty-eight, which gave us a cross-wind component well above our maximum. So, I was stunned when SAC gave the clearance to launch and preposition the Glass at Walker AFB. To my surprise, the IP accepted the word to go and I had the extreme urge to get the hell off of that airplane...I should have!

As power was applied, huge wind gusts were buffeting the aircraft. We were partially shielded by the buildings on our right and I said, "Self, you'd better say your

prayers". (Which I did!) At about thirty knots, the nose wheels started scrubbing. As the airspeed increased, the scrubbing increased. I could see that the aircraft was grossly misaligned with the runway. (We could still have aborted.) At this rate I figured that we would rotate somewhere over in Bellevue. As the aircraft passed Base Ops and the hangars, a giant gust hit us. Because there was no runway left laterally, the pilot rotated and the right wing snapped up at a very sharp angle. Conversely, the left wing tip and #1 engine were very close to dragging the dirt. This angle was maintained for what seemed like an eternity...in reality, it was probably a second or so. We'd made it!

We had just made it through the worst incident of my twenty year flying career. What a nightmare. Perhaps, the author of the clearance for that flight of the Glass should have a KC-135 strapped to his butt and be forced to make that takeoff continuously in his afterlife.

The general, whom I will not name, made the greatest understatement that I heard in my life. "We won't ever do that again!"

Flying on the Glass was interesting, at times.

### NOT EVERYONE COULD ATTEND THE 1994 REUNION

Following is the text of a memo, dated 24 June 1994, received by the Association, in response to an invitation to attend our 1994 reunion in Omaha:

"Thanks so much for your wonderful letter and gracious invitation to be with you for the reunion of the SAC Airborne Command Control System this fall. I know it will be a wonderful gathering, and I wish I could accept. Regrettably, though, I cannot. The schedule through the end of the year is nearly impossible already. I

have found that I simply do not have the luxury of unencumbered time that I thought that I would have.

Please pass along, to all who gather, my regrets, my respects and my best wishes for a happy and memorable reunion. I will be with you in spirit."

/signed/ GEORGE BUSH

(Editors Note: President Bush, then a member of Congress, visited Offutt AFB in July 1968. As a part of his DV tours and briefings, he received the **LOOKING GLASS** briefing on board an EC-135C aircraft of the 38th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron. A photograph, taken during his visit to the Glass, is among the memorabilia in the "Trophy Room", Hq 55th Wing.)

### HIGH FLIGHT

John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth

And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings

Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth of sun-split clouds

And done a hundred things you have not dreamed of

Wheeled and soared and swung, high in the sunlit silence

Hov'ring there, I've chased the shouting wind along

And flung my eager craft through footless halls of air

Up, up the long delirious, burning blue

I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace

Where never lark, nor even eagle flew

And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod

The high untrespassed sanctity of space

Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

### THE MIDNIGHT GLASS

(With apologies to John Gillespie Magee, Jr.)

Oh, I have slipped the surly uphill bonds of Runway Three Zero

And pierced the midnight gloom on the heavy laden wings of Axle Four Four Alpha

Westward I've climbed and joined the endless chatter with Chicago Center

And heard a hundred things you have not dreamed of

Wheedling and begging and pleading in the early morning bedlam

For a flight level where the shouting wind is still

And my eager craft may pass smoothly through footless halls of air 'Round and 'round the endless blue of Bravo Route

I've shuttled the windswept heights from Sioux City to Saint Joe

Where never airline but only Looking Glass would go

And, then, with fearful sinking heart, I'm told

Offutt is two--hundred-and-a-half, the RCR is five

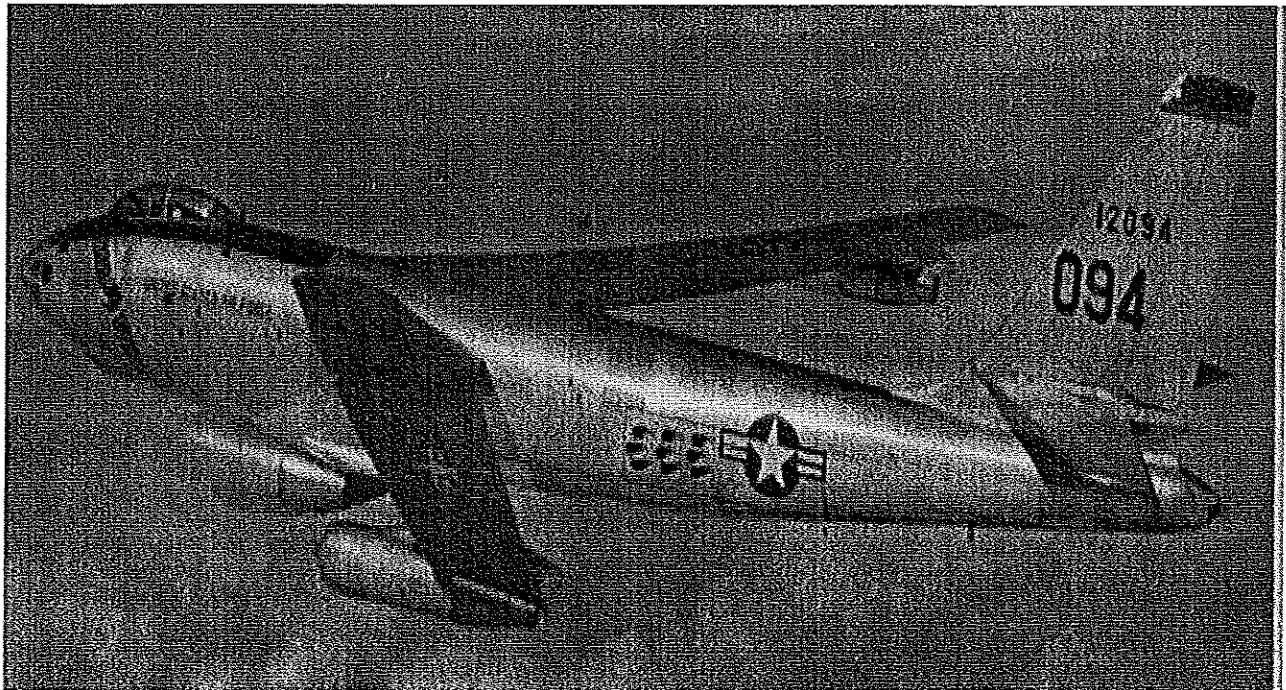
With a mix of fog and sleet and blowing snow

I place our fate in the hands of GCA And put out my hand to calm the AEAO.



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PACCS "Pipe Cleaner"