



The SAC ACCA Flyer

Strategic Air Command
Airborne Command Control Association

Recording, Preserving and Celebrating the Legacy of PACCS

Volume XII, Issue 2

August 2006

SAC ACCA BEGINNINGS TO THE PRESENT

By Fred Kemp

Back in February 1991, I got a telephone call from Chase Huber, a retired boom operator at Grissom AFB, Indiana, who had just received a call from Jack Suggs, our first 3ACCS Squadron Commander, wanting to know if we could set up a 3ACCS reunion at Grissom later in the year. Chase and I contacted John Robillard and Bob Hodge, held a meeting and decided on May as a good time and that we would also contact Russ Evans, Joe Elmore, Rick Cabeen and the ABNCP radio relay crews that were still at Grissom. Since the base was quite a ways from any tourist attractions, we were only able to set up two dinners- one at the existing NCO Club (now designated for all ranks) and the other at the closed Officers Club. We also set up a boat tour on the recently completed Mississinewa Reservoir. The reunion was well-attended, although the Grissom Inn's air conditioning failed and it was a very warm May. At a breakfast meeting the day after, it was decided to have another reunion the fall of '93. This did not happen, however, due to Grissom's realignment as an Air Reserve Base (BRAC List.)

After much discussion, Wally Langdon was persuaded to plan a reunion in Omaha

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the memories of the good times in Tucson begin to fade, it's time to turn our thoughts and energies to our next reunion planned for 2008 in Dayton, Ohio. Your officers earnestly request your input using the enclosed survey.

For long time members, Fred Kemp's article provides a good summary of the great memories from the Association's past. Let's all work very hard to make this next reunion our best yet!

THE WEST LINK

By Steve Leazer

At the reunion in Tucson this spring someone mentioned the fact that there weren't many of us around who participated in and remember the role of the B-47L in the PACCS mission. Those of you who have been members since the early days of this Association may want to also look back to a superb article about the B-47L written some time ago by our Historian, Greg Ogletree. What follows is my recollection of those days and from the perspective of a Communications System Maintainer. Some of you may remember

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for the Fall of '94 and at that reunion, which was well-attended too, a decision was made to try for an Airborne Command Post organization with its first officers being President, Jack Suggs; VP, Don Wilson; Secretary, Jack Gatewood and Treasurer, Russ Evans. The next reunion was also scheduled for Omaha with Wally Langdon agreeing to coordinate once more. Russ Evans was unable to complete his tenure as Treasurer so I took over temporarily in 1995.

At the 1996 reunion, we had applied for our charter through the state of Florida. The name that was chosen was Strategic Air Command Airborne Command Control Association and membership was open to any current or former member of the ABNCP as well as those interested in the organization. Re-elected again were Jack Suggs as President, Don Wilson as VP, Jack Gatewood as Secretary and I as Treasurer. The next reunion was scheduled for Colorado Springs with Richard (Dick) Doolittle volunteering to be the planner.

The 1998 reunion occurred less than one month after the transfer of the Looking Glass mission to the US Navy and we were asked to help with the ceremony. For many of us, the final take-off of Looking Glass was a very emotional experience and one we'll never forget. The Colorado Springs reunion was an outstanding success, not only because the area offered so many tourist venues, but especially because it included a final flyover of the ABNCP during the half-time ceremony of the Air Force/Navy game at the AF Academy stadium where we were all in attendance. New officers elected were Jack Suggs, President Emeritus; Jim Spence, President; Don McClain, VP; George Smeltzer, Secretary and I as Treasurer. Shortly thereafter, George was unable to complete his time as Secretary and Steve Leazer volunteered to complete his term

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2006 — 2008

Board of Directors

President	Jim Kroskey
Vice President	Jim Dart
Treasurer	George Birch GEBirch@aol.com
Secretary	Wilton Curtis WCurtis135@aol.com
President Emeritus	Jack Suggs

Appointed Officers

Historian	Greg Ogletree
Reunion 2008 Planners	Rick Cabeen Jim Dart

Reunion site:
Dayton, Ohio

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Information, general correspondence, changes of mailing address, newsletter articles or recommendations to:

SAC ACCA
c/o Wilton Curtis, Secretary
2319 Pleasant Run Dr.
Richmond, VA 23238-3026

Renewals & New Membership to:

SAC ACCA
c/o George Birch, Treasurer
2031 W. Placita de Enero
Green Valley, AZ 85614-5433

**ADDITION TO THE MINUTES OF
APRIL 8, 2006**

Please add the following statement to the end of the second sentence, next-to-last paragraph, following the word Flyer: "when the next of kin notifies the Association."

Editor's Note: This addition was recommended by Steve Leazer, preceding Secretary, and was reviewed by the Association's new officers.

FROM THE SECRETARY

Steve Leazer has served outstandingly in this position for more than six years and the Association has benefited greatly from his professional discharge of the duties of the office. I have a lot to learn and wish to publicly thank him for his excellent cooperation, thereby ensuring a smooth transition.

Your help is needed in maintaining the high standards he and others before him have established in publishing the Flyer. If we are to record and preserve the legacy of PACCS it will best come from members' recollections and memories of their varied experiences while serving. Those stories represent a priceless and irreplaceable piece of our nation's military history and should not be lost.

At the Tucson reunion, my first, I could not help quietly observing members present, often wondering about the various assignments they have had and reflecting on the unique service that each has provided our country. Few Americans today can fully appreciate the role played during the Cold War by the representative group pictured on the back page of this publication nor the significance of the aircraft-the last USAF plane in active service to bear the name LOOKING GLASS.

Please share some of those moments by **writing** them down and **forwarding** them via **U.S. or E-mail**. If you prefer, send some notes and I'll edit them for your approval.

***** REMINDER *****

ASSOCIATIONAL DUES COVER THE TIME PERIOD OF 1 JANUARY THROUGH 31 DECEMBER AND ARE DUE ON THE FIRST DAY OF JANUARY OF EACH YEAR.

CHECK THE YEAR ON YOUR MAILING LABEL IN ORDER TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE CURRENT.

USE THE ENCLOSED MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/ANNUAL DUES FORM AND MAIL TO THE TREASURER. (BE SURE TO UPDATE ANY CHANGES.)



Editor's Comment: In Virginia, an extra fee allows you to register and display personalized license plates. Those on my car sometimes prompt a question as to their meaning which provides me an opportunity to discuss the role of PACCS during the Cold War. (Send us a picture of your own unique tags for publishing in a future issue.)

that in the early days of PACCS (about 1963), the 34th ARS, then at Offutt, provided the aircraft, aircrew and two Communications System Maintainers, to support the 15th AF Auxiliary Airborne Command Post, Stepmother. As I recall, 15th AF provided its own Radio Operators, Crypto Operators and Battle Staff.

Every two weeks a rotation took place with another 34th ARS aircraft relieving the one already at March AFB. Once we arrived at March, the aircraft was "cocked" and placed on alert along with the 15th AF B-52Bs and KC-135s. The 34th ARS aircrew and one of the Communications System Maintainers took up residence in the Alert Facility. As I recall, Stepmother was routinely launched about once a week at that time with additional, "no notice" launches as determined by SAC Headquarters.

I would guess that there are several of our ACCA members who flew Stepmother and who remember precisely where the orbit was located in those days. From my perspective I just remember that, at the time, a good part of it was over a portion of those magnificent California Mountains. Whenever time permitted I enjoyed going aft and crawling into the boom pod to enjoy that great view. Those mountains looked even more foreboding in the winter and I thought, more than once, that it sure wouldn't be a good place to be if one had to bail out. The recent discovery of a WWII airman found still frozen in the mountains of California from 1942 further verifies that foreboding feeling.

Along the line-of-sight radio path between our orbit (Stepmother) and Looking Glass were two B-47Ls that performed the duty of airborne radio relay. One of those West link aircraft was launched out of Lincoln AFB. The second B-47L was launched from Mountain Home AFB (on the East link there was at least one additional B-47L launched out of Lockbourne). Though I have seen the operational map many times, I can not really fix their orbit

points (senior memory, yes.) The West link, as it was called, was always particularly tenuous and a struggle to maintain solid communications. There are limits to the distance that reliable UHF communications can be stable and that doesn't even begin to touch upon how primitive (by comparison to later versions) radio electronics systems were in that era.

Sometimes it seemed like the aircrews in the B-47s didn't have a lot of knowledge about the radio relay system. That statement is not intended as a criticism of the aircrew, just recognition of how out of character the mission was for a bomber crew. Fortunately, we had some exceptionally knowledgeable and skilled Radio Operators. They had a solid understanding of how the B-47L system was set up. That included the control panels and switches internal to the B-47L, as well. They had been struggling with that West link for some time before Radio Maintainers started to fly the mission with them. We Maintainers worked closely with the ROs and B-47 copilots in an attempt to determine the cause of the many communications issues, to trace them to the source and to effect resolution where possible. The ROs were frequently able to help the B-47 copilot make necessary switch and/or system configuration changes that resulted in a successful mission. It is certainly worth noting that the problem was difficult enough that some B-47Ls carried a Maintainer along to assist in accomplishing that mission.

The radio equipment in the B-47L was located in a pod or pods in the bomb bay of the aircraft. I only saw this set-up a couple of times on trips from Offutt to Lincoln AFB. One thing I particularly remember about the Transmitter pod was that it had a major problem with water condensation internal to the pods. In one, I saw indications of a water line that was just about high enough to flood one of the transmitter high voltage power supplies. That, besides the obvious consequences, would cause the transmitter to "trip" off line. These pods were pressurized, but obviously did not

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Montgomery, Alabama was the site of the 2000 reunion with Jim Spence as the planner. We had a very nice time in a very old city that included an interesting dinner trip up the river and back. Carl Bryant was elected President, Lincoln Hill as VP, Steve Leazer and I were re-elected as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.

Jim Bostick was our reunion planner for 2002 held in St. Louis, Missouri. We spent quite a bit of time traveling and, once again, had a riverboat cruise and dinner. Many of us took the ride to the top of the Arch. I was elected President, Ken Witkin Vice-President, Steve Leazer was re-elected Secretary and Jim Kroskey, Treasurer.

For 2004, we returned to Omaha for our tenth anniversary as an organization. The highlight of this trip was the group's visit to Offutt and boarding the ABNCP 747 aircraft. At this reunion, planned by Jim Simons, Jim Kroskey was elected President, Ken Witkin was re-elected VP, Steve Leazer was re-elected Secretary and George Birch, Treasurer.

We decided to get the people out of the colder, northern part of the Country for 2006 and held the reunion in sunny Tucson, Arizona. Sandy and I, assisted by Anne and George Birch, were the reunion planners and we were able to schedule a large variety of activities for the attendees including a trip across the border into Mexico. With Davis Monthan's aircraft "bone yard" located there, the group got to revisit many of our old airplanes one more time. Jim Kroskey was re-elected President, Jim Dart VP, Wilton Curtis Secretary and George Birch was re-elected as Treasurer.

We have been fortunate to have Greg Ogle-tree as Historian except for the short time Everett (Ducky) Dunn held the position. Jack Gatewood is still doing our annual charter through the state of Florida and Jack Suggs continues as our President Emeritus since being elevated to that position in 1998.

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have an effective method of purging the accumulating water or to prevent it in the first place. That alone probably accounted for many of the problems on the link.

A successful full duplex radio link required two operational transmitters and two receivers in each B-47L. I believe that there was some "hot" spare equipment aboard the B-47L, but I do not recall how much. I believe there were one spare transmitter and one spare receiver that the copilot could switch in/out. As far as I am aware, there was no in-flight access to the equipment, so the system either worked in flight or it didn't and flexibility was somewhat limited. Sometimes though, these situations could be corrected in flight by skilled aircrew and the Maintenance Technician.

Later the B-47L was replaced in the link by other EC-135s as the Radio Relay aircraft. Once that happened the operations were more successful or at least less of a struggle. The EC-135 had more equipment, thereby providing considerably more flexibility since nearly all of its radio equipment was available in flight. They carried both ROs and RMs and for the most part, we had solid communications across the link. That in no small part was due to the skill and dedication for which SAC was known and the ability of all of the appropriate personnel to talk to one another to resolve issues and get the job done.

4TH ACCS REUNION

**THE 15 YEAR REUNION WILL BE
JUNE 15-17, 2007 IN RAPID CITY, SD.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT
MARY HILLMAN OR JEFF BIXLER**

**mdhillman@fedteldirect.net
jbixler@blackhills.com**



Strategic Air Command Airborne Command Control Association SAC ACCA

Recording, Preserving and Celebrating the Legacy of PACCS
Membership Application or Annual Dues

Name: _____ Spouse's name: _____
(Last, First, Middle)

Rank/Title: _____ Branch of Service: _____ Status: _____
(Active, Retired, other)

Mailing Address:

Phone No.: _____ Email address: _____

Indicate your affiliation with PACCS [Organization - Duty - (Dates)] Examples: [22nd ARS - IP (74-82)], [34ARS - BO (63-66)], [HQ SAC - ABS (69-71)], [2nd ACCS - In-flight Maint (69-72)], [55th SRW - Staff (72-73)], [(4th ACCS - Crew Chief (74-76)], [AEAO/40ADIV (74-76)], [SAC Hq - Planner (88-90)].

Amount Enclosed:

Initial Fee (\$10.00) Annual Dues (\$15.00) for Year _____ Reinstatement (\$10.00)

If paying annual dues, please indicate for what year you are paying. (The current paid year for your dues will be found enclosed in parentheses on the mailing label of your most recent news-letter.)

New memberships require the payment of the initial fee and dues for the year (\$25.00). Dues are for the period 1 Jan through 31 Dec and are due the first day of January (\$15.00) each year. A reinstatement fee, plus current dues, is due for inactive members who wish to reactivate their membership after an absence of two or more years (\$25.00).

Please indicate your preference regarding the publication of your name and address on membership rosters which may be provided to the membership of SAC ACCA.

I authorize : Name, U.S Mail and Email addresses on ACCA rosters to the general membership.
 None of the above to be published on ACCA rosters to the general membership.

Send to: SAC ACCA
George Birch, Treasurer
2031 W. Placita de Enero
Green Valley, AZ 85614-5433

SAC ACCA FUTURE REUNIONS

At the business meeting in Tucson on April 8, 2006, there was discussion concerning future reunions and a survey of the membership to determine the type, location and activities preferred. You may want to refer to the minutes published in the April edition of the Flyer for details. **Your input is strongly requested** in order to provide the officers guidance for future planning. The 2008 location will be Dayton, Ohio but no decision has been made as to the 2010 site.

REUNION PREFERENCES SURVEY

JOINT REUNION:

DAYTON, OHIO 2008: Suggested activities

Work with another group such as the 55th SRWA, SAC Group, etc.

- Yes
- No
- No preference

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Presentations of PACCS programs by members
- Other _____

2010 LOCATION: (List top three choices in order - 1, 2, 3)

<u>Site</u>	<u>Will volunteer to help in planning</u>	<u>Suggested activities</u> (Attach extra pages, if needed)
<input type="checkbox"/> Las Vegas, Nevada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Mesa, Arizona	<input type="checkbox"/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Portland, Oregon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> San Antonio, Texas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Seattle, Washington	<input type="checkbox"/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Washington, D.C.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<hr/> <hr/>

(Member's Name)

Complete the above survey and forward to the Secretary by September 15, 2006

**SAC Airborne Command Control Association
Wilton O. Curtis, Secretary
2319 Pleasant Run Drive
Richmond, VA 23238-3026**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Tucson Reunion, AMARC, 8 April 2006, EC-135C, Aircraft 63-8048