

THUNDER ROLLS



Summer 2006
Volume 13

Boss Patterakis Farewell to a Great Leader



Editor's note: The TBAA unexpectedly lost its chairman and longtime mentor Boss Chris Patterakis May 9. He served as left wing from 1966-67, but more importantly as commander/leader from 1975-76 where he led the Team through many "Thunder-firsts." The following tribute was written by Bob Gore (1974-76), who served as Boss Patterakis' information officer:

Who are a man's heroes? About whom can one say, I wish I were more like him?

I'm not sure I liked him in the beginning. As time moved through 1975, I didn't. I said to him, "Boss, I anger you all the time. I do not belong here. I am hereby offering my resignation. I will stay as long as you need me to train someone else and then leave quietly so that I do not embarrass the Team. I will work as hard as I know how until I leave."

"What?!" He was shocked. So was I! "Look, he said. Don't take it personally. Sometimes I screw myself into the ceiling . . . I overreact." He grinned, "I'm Greek."

I stood silent for what seemed like a long time. I thought, I can live with that.

"Oh . . . OK . . . Sorry to trouble you, Boss." I went back to work and back to the most rewarding years of my life.

Recently, as I wrote an e-mail to someone who asked if I knew the details of Chris' death, I wept. I have lost someone very important to me; a part of my soul is vacant. All the bumps we shared and created for each other are now bricks on the long path of a very close friendship.

He used to say, "Be careful what you write in a letter because the person receiving it doesn't know what tone of voice you wrote it in." And "Don't mess in someone else's pocket because someday you may have to reach in there for a quarter." I have been only marginally successful at following both pieces of advice, much to his dismay but not to his surprise.

Chris defines dichotomy. There are two sides of him: Outside a warrior with steel armor who demands the best from people; inside a gobbler whose eyes well up when he talks of God, family, country and the Team. Chris absolutely loved the boyz, which is probably a surprise to many of them. I saw his love of the EMs in his eyes. I heard it in his voice. I do not remember a single time that he praised his officers when speaking of the Team, but he praised the boyz and the Team as a whole. He would say that we were a collection of leaders around whom he could only put his arms. He would brag about our dedication to country and to each other. He commented that he learned to be careful when thinking aloud because if he mumbled to himself that his office door would look better on the right instead of the left, he'd come home from a trip to find the boyz had moved his door.

Once at a show site – in Louisiana, I think – the Team officers sat with a longtime supporter at a fine restaurant. The patron leaned to Chris and muttered something unfavorable about one of our officers . . . "Him" . . .

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Patterakis continued

as he nodded towards Fig. Chris ordered all officers to leave. He emptied the money from his wallet onto the table and said that he hoped it was enough to pay for dinner. And then he left.

What would a lesser man have done? I don't know. I know what I'd do now because of Chris' example.

Under his leadership, the Team justified its first jet transport, added music to the air show, brought back – for a time at least – the dual solo and founded the TBAA. During the Bicentennial, we flew 102 air shows at 86 different show sites from Alaska to Florida in an airplane with short legs and no ability to refuel in flight. The schedule exhausted us, and we plied our trade while dealing with the lingering bad taste some Americans had for the Vietnam patriot. Tempers flared and faded, sparks between wheels and rail as the show train rolled from place to place. Chris hammered us into hard metal with an edge. He inspired us by not once making a decision where his personal interest was paramount. To Chris it was the Team, the Team, always the Team. He jumped on the slightest hint of vanity. He forced us to always consider others above ourselves. He would say, "Our job is not to fly air shows. Our job is to bring people to us so we can tell them the Air Force story." And then, "Individually we are not the best – only the best of those who applied. It is only together that we are the best."

To this day the Bicentennial Team's dedication to that which is beyond ourselves can only be described as remarkable. At points in the TBAA's history, more than half the board came from this one Team. At any other time, there are more TBAA volunteers from this Team than from any other. It is members of Chris' Team that led the reinvention of the TBAA and founded the Heritage Thunderbird Foundation. It is we who dreamed of the "These Names are Mine" sculpture and then shared that dream with all our brothers and sisters. We are not remarkable people. We had a remarkable leader.

I miss Chris not so much for what he meant to me but how he changed me. I miss him not because of his support but because of his demands.

Farewell, Boss. I wish I were more like you . . . which answers the question in the first line of this tribute.

Patterakis family: Wife, Vicki of Alexandria, Va.; four children, Donna Martin of Discovery Bay, Calif., Patricia Perea and Marc Patterakis, both of Denver, and Alicia Rodahaffer of Reno, Nev. Address: 5903 Mt. Eagle Drive No. 216, Alexandria, VA 22303.

– Bob Gore (IO, the Bicentennial Team)

ThunderBike Custom motorcycle built to benefit children, TBA

June 15-17 the thunder in Davenport, Iowa, wasn't the "sound of freedom" beckoning from overhead during the area's annual Quad City Air Show. As the roar of the jets from two weeks prior faded,



the rumble of thousands of motorcycles drowned the silence during "Sturgis on the River" – the Midwest's largest annual gathering of motorcycles.

Even though the nation's second-best air demonstration team headlined the Red, White and Blues-themed air show, the

spotlight shined on America's "Ambassadors in Blue" at the motorcycle rally as a custombuilt Thunderbirds bike was unveiled June 17.

A Harley-Davidson V-Rod was transformed into a single-seat Thunderbirds fighter by bike-building legend "Dr. Neon" (aka Alex Evans) whose light kits and products are incorporated into custom built motorcycles by the likes of Jesse James of West Coast Choppers and the Teutul family's Orange County Choppers.

"Our local Harley-Davidson dealership arranged for us to purchase the motorcycle at cost," said Glenn Rohm, a Sturgis on the River organizer and project coordinator for the Thunderbird bike. "It was shipped to Dr. Neon in Asheville, N.C., where it was stripped down and transformed."

The project, which included fabricating just about everything from the scalloped nose with wings and missile rails to the tail section complete with horizontal and vertical stabilizers and an afterburner taillight, took approximately six months to complete. But the idea was hatched months before the first piece of sheet metal was cut.

"We were at a charity event for the Wunsch Family Foundation with Dave Haworth (Advance Pilot/Narrator, 2004-06), and the idea came up during our conversation. It took on a life of its own from there," Rohm said.



Now that the bike is complete, organizers will show it off and are also devising ways on how to use it in an effort to give back to those who inspired its creation.

"For the immediate term, we plan on taking the bike on tour and putting it on display at various events throughout the country," Rohm said. "Eventually, plans are to sell the bike and donate all proceeds after costs to the Thunderbirds Heritage and the Wunsch Family foundations. We will also be selling merchandise such as T-shirts and donating the money to both organizations."

The project organizers are exploring several different methods including eBay, private collector's auctions and corporate donations.

"Nothing has been ruled out at this point and both foundations will have a say in what we ultimately decide," Rohm said. "My ultimate dream would be to see it purchased by someone and donated to the TBAA for display in the Thunderbirds Museum."

The TBAA will continue to follow the project's progress and provide updates in *Thunder Rolls* and at www.thunderbirdsalumni.org. To see more photos of the bike being built, visit: www.glowjob.com/images/gallery/tbirds/thunderbirds.html.



About the Wunsch Family Foundation

The Wunsch Family Foundation was started by Seattle Seahawks Offensive Tackle Jerry Wunsch and his wife, Melissa, in 2001 when Jerry played for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The foundation provides children with cancer and chronic blood disorders emotional, motivational and memorable experiences through supportive and empowering opportunities. In 2003, Jerry was awarded the NFL charities impact player of the year award and has been named on Sporting News' Good Guy Award list for five consecutive years.

– Chuck Ramey (Public Affairs, 1994-98)

– Photos courtesy Tom Zwica (Honorary Thunderbird, 2003)

From the Chairman

We lost our chairman and friend “Boss” Chris Patterakis on May 9 (See full story on Page 1 and at tbaa.org, Breaking News).

None of us was prepared for his passing, least of all me as vice chairman. I was looking forward to two outstanding years under his leadership and mentoring. Now we must move on as Chris would want us to do.

Your board of directors has asked me to be chairman. I am humbled and honored to serve you for the next 16 months leading up to our 2007 Reunion. Bob Beckel has agreed to serve as vice chairman.

Here’s our new board lineup:

Jim Jannette, Chairman; Bob Beckel, Vice Chairman; Debby Baer-Becker, Secretary; Dave Branks, Treasurer; Jack Brown, Director; Matt Byrd, Director; Steve Chealander, Director; Jim Curry, Director; Mary Kochel, Director; Brock McMahon, Director; and Chuck Ramey, Director.

As a board, we have agreed to stay the course Chris had set for us:

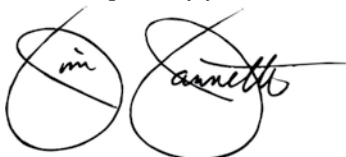
- To continue to support the active Team in any way we can
- To plan for a memorable and affordable reunion in 2007
- To increase membership in the TBAA
- To be good stewards of our TBAA finances
- To publish informative *Thunder Rolls*
- To maintain and update tbaa.org

As soon as we learned of Boss Patterakis’s death, we put the news on the “News and Events” site, and we sent e-mails to those team members he served with. However, we learned we did not have an effective way to highlight real-time events. Now, when you go to tbaa.org, you will see a “Breaking News” button on the right-hand side of the home page near the top. Click on the button for the latest news related to the TBAA or the Team.

Reunion 2007: We have selected the South Coast Hotel and Casino, 9777 Las Vegas Blvd. South, as the host hotel for our event. Debby Baer-Becker is chair and Brock McMahon is co-chair for our event. We have already done the work to offer you a fun and affordable event. Specific details about reunion will follow in future *Thunder Rolls* and on the Web site, so please mark your calendars now for Nov. 14-17, 2007.

In closing, to truly carry on Chris’ legacy, please work with all your hearts to reach out to your team members who are not active in our great legacy organization.

I am respectfully yours,



Jim Jannette, Chairman
(PAO, 1979-82)



Thunderbirds Announce 2007 Officers

NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, Nev. – The U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, “Thunderbirds,” has announced its new officers for the 2007 demonstration season, the 54th in the team’s history.

Joining the team on the left wing is Maj. Chris Austin from the 57th Wing here.

The slot pilot is Maj. William Poteet of the 422nd Test and Evaluation Squadron here.

The 2007 opposing solo is Capt. Samantha Weeks of the 12th Fighter Squadron at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska.

The operations officer is Maj. Robert Skelton of Headquarters U.S. Air Forces Europe, Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

The team’s newest executive officer is Capt. Amy Glisson of the Air Force District of Washington at Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.

Joining the team as the maintenance officer is Capt. Charles Plötz of the 52nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Spangdahlem AB, Germany.

Rounding out the newest 2007 officers is the public affairs officer, Capt. Elizabeth Kreft, of the 1st Fighter Wing at Langley AFB, Va.

– Courtesy Air Force Print News

Groom Passes Away

Retired colonel and TBAA lifetime member John Groom (Commander, 1962) passed away July 11 in Las Vegas. He was 87.

John Groom Jr., of Las Vegas, said his father died at University Medical Center of complications from a stroke. He had lived in Las Vegas for 15 years.

Colonel Groom was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery Aug. 8.

A commander during the F-100C Super Sabre era, Colonel Groom led the team through performances in Central America and South America, as well as in the United States.

Later, he went on to become the last commander of Wheelus Air Base in Tripoli, Libya, just before the closure of the base in 1970, a year after Moammar Kadafi led a coup against the country’s monarchy. He was a key player in the evacuation of Tripoli and was responsible for getting U.S. citizens out of the city.

Family: Wife, Barbara Groom, of Las Vegas; sons, John Jr., of Las Vegas and Tom Groom of The Woodlands, Texas. Address: 3036 Lotus Hill Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89134.

– Courtesy *Las Vegas Review-Journal*

Hangar Modernization Project in Full Swing

Like all Thunderbirds who have gone before me, I am slowly adjusting to life outside of the Red, White and Blue. It has been my absolute honor to serve as the Commander/Leader of the Thunderbirds, and I am proud to have the word "alumni" next to my name. Boss Robbins and the 2006 Team are carrying on the strong tradition we have all established over the past 53 years.



As I look back over my time as "TBI," I'm very excited about some of the things we were able to

accomplish, but realize there is much work left to be done. One such area is the continued pursuit of an upgrade to our facilities. Although the Thunderbird Hangar is one our most prized possessions, it is also one of the oldest facilities on Nellis Air Force Base.

Over the last few years, we've been able to secure some funding for improvements to the hangar. Last year we were fortunate to receive a fairly large sum of money to replace the hangar doors, which had become a serious safety concern and a burden on the Team. Replacing the hangar doors is a big step towards modernizing our facility. However, there is still a lot of work to be done to upgrade the place we call "home," and money spent on cosmetic facility improvements for all military units in the foreseeable future will be kept to a minimum.

With that in mind, we started the Hangar Modernization Project.

So far, the response has been favorable. Although we are well short of our goal, I think the overwhelming feeling is that people want to support the team and make it better for those who will wear the patch in the future.



For those folks who have contributed to our effort already, we cannot thank you enough for your generous support. A \$3,000 contribution from the TBAA paid for one of the two flat-screen television sets that sit behind the bar area. For those who are still contemplating a donation or are unfamiliar with the project, I'd like to provide an update.

The modernization effort has been broken down into three phases.

Phase I is the remodeling of the Perch and is already under way. Phase II will provide a facelift for the upstairs "welcome area" (outside the secretary's office) and the operations side of the hangar. Phase III is the construction of a workout facility in the AGE Yard that will be used by all Thunderbird personnel. The timing of each phase will be determined by fund-raising and the time it takes to complete the work. I consider this effort to be a long-term project; however, the sooner we complete the work, the sooner the Team will be able to use and enjoy the improved areas.

For those (individuals, companies, etc.) who make a financial contribution, their name will be inscribed in a beautiful marble wall located in the Perch. This wall will have special lighting that illuminates the patch at all times and the rest of the wall when desired. The financial category will determine how much space you are allotted for your personal inscription.

We have broken down the financial contributions into the following categories:

Bronze: \$100-\$499 (one line only . . . shared block with 10-20 other names).

Silver: \$500-\$999 (two lines on a quarter of a block . . . shared with three other donors)

Gold: \$1,000-\$4,999 (three lines on a half of a block . . . shared with one other donor).

Platinum: \$5,000+ (the entire block is yours).

The current commander/leader will have final say on the block inscription if there is a question regarding format or appropriateness of the message.

The contribution categories listed above are meant only as a guide, so please give any amount you are comfortable with. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law and checks should be made out to:

The Heritage Thunderbird Foundation
Hangar Modernization Project
Thunderbirds Alumni Association
7661 Angel Crest Circle
Las Vegas, NV 89117-3220

My sincere thanks to everyone for your continuing support of the Team and the mission.

– Mike "Chanz" Chandler (Commander/Leader, 2004-06)



Reunion Perch Selected

The TBAA Board of Directors has selected the brand new South Coast Hotel and Casino to be the official Perch for Reunion 007 scheduled Nov. 14-17, 2007

Located on Las Vegas Boulevard South, just minutes from the Strip, the 1,350-room resort features a complete equestrian complex and 150,000 sq. ft. of convention, exhibit and banquet space. Some of the many amenities include a 16-screen Century theater movie complex, 64-lane bowling center and a handful of restaurants that cater to all appetites and tastes. Each of the resort's spacious rooms and suites include a 42-inch plasma television, Coast Plush mattresses and wi-fi throughout.

"We considered several resorts and decided on the South Coast for many reasons," said Debby Baer-Becker, Reunion 007 chairman.

"In addition to the beautiful rooms and first class event facilities, there are activities within the facility for people of all ages."



The South Coast will be extending a special rate to Reunion 007 attendees. More details will be released in future editions of *Thunder Rolls* and at www.thunderbirdsalumni.org.

Volunteers are needed for Reunion 007. Those interested should contact Debby Baer-Becker at dbbecker2@yahoo.com or Brock McMahon at Brock.McMahon@travis.af.mil.

Super Trooper

'85 Fitz Recipient Goes from Crewing Loads to Patrolling Roads

Thunder-brother turned Nevada State Trooper Sergeant Jim Olschlager is sincere when he says, "I'm lucky because two times in my life I've had jobs where I cannot wait to get to work!" One is his current job as a "boy in blue." The other is the years when he wore the Thunderbirds patch. Just two days after Jim's Air Force retirement ceremony, he started the rigors of the state troopers' academy and, shortly after, was sworn to protect and serve the State of Nevada's public citizens.

Jim spent 1982-86 with the Thunderbirds Team crewing the #5, #7 and #8 jets. He crewed during both the 1984 European and the 1985 South American tours and received the 1985 Fitzgerald award for his impeccable service and dedication to the Team.

I recently had the distinct privilege (and adrenaline rush) of sitting front seat with Jim during a ride-along.

The Friday early morning hour suggests things should be quiet on the highways, but rush hour starts early for Las Vegas commuters and crime is 24/7. Jim and I buzz along the busy roads in his Nevada Highway Patrol SUV, complete with sirens, bells and whistles, listening to intermittent radio chatter between the dispatcher and other troopers. It seems everyone is in place and ready for anything.

At one of Jim's favorite "fishing holes" (good hiding places to catch speeders), we see our first bit of action – a car speeding at well over 100 miles per hour. There's no shortage of rush hour's fast drivers, and Jim decides to pull this one over. My Thunderbird teammates would be surprised to see friendly "Jimmy O's" transformation to formidable "Trooper O" as he writes the driver a ticket.

Then, just when we thought it was going to be a somewhat quiet morning, the radio springs to life. Suddenly, we are accelerating down an access lane in a high-speed pursuit. The chase ends in a fiery crash as a drug- and alcohol-impaired driver hits the concrete median. Troopers arrive on the scene and take charge with super-human speed. Jim deftly manages the traffic situation as officers subdue the suspects and emergency responders arrive on scene. The driver, a repeat offender, will go to jail after his injuries are addressed at the local hospital.

Jim's stern countenance masks his genuine compassion and willingness to help people – necessary qualities for someone who, many



times, arrives first to the scene. When Jim was a second-year trooper, he was first at the scene where a drug-impaired driver had run down seven teenagers. Six of the seven teenagers were killed. One of the teens died in Jim's arms. The teens were cleaning up trash along the highway as part of a community service project. All troopers are trained in first aid/first responder, but it is Jim's strength of character, compassion and training that helped him through a tough, heartbreaking situation. Weeks later, he testified in court against the woman who had committed this criminal act. Jim eventually appeared on Court TV for this case, Nevada's largest DUI with death. The criminal received a maximum sentence.

Jim continues to support his fellow Air Force members as the liaison between Nellis AFB and the Nevada Highway Patrol. He briefs new Airmen on the potential dangers associated with Las Vegas traffic and culture. In his off time, he and his wife, Lynn, zip around town in their new Mustang (minding the speed limits, of course).

– Debby Baer-Becker,
(Public Affairs, 1981-83)

Thunderbirds Team flies 4,000th Demo

The Thunderbirds performed their 4,000th air demonstration May 13 at Robins Air Force Base, Ga. The show was the team's 14th of the 2006 season.

"We perform about 70 air demonstrations throughout the year, representing the 530,000 men and women in our Air Force," said Lt. Col. Kevin Robbins, Thunderbirds commander. "We are proud to be able to go throughout the United States talking about our brothers and sisters in arms who are supporting the war on terror and putting bombs on targets daily. This 4,000th show is just another way to represent those people."

Air Demo Milestones

August 11, 1965: 1,000th Air Demo, Waukegan Boating Festival, Waukegan, Ill., Aircraft – F-100D

May 8, 1976: 2,000th Air Demo, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, Aircraft – T-38A

April 22, 1990: 3,000th Air Demo, Norfolk Naval Air Station, Va., Aircraft – F-16A/B

May 13, 2006: 4,000th Air Demo, Robins Air Force Base, Ga., Aircraft – F-16C/D

(Information courtesy Carol Knotts, TBAA historian)

As the team passes this milestone, they look to the future and what it will take to reach yet another history-making day: 5,000 shows.

"Our team is definitely capable of reaching that goal," said Staff Sgt. Matthew Acevedo, a Thunderbirds information manager. "Every one of us has followed in the footsteps of another and, upon the end of our tours, another proud Airman will replace us to continue our traditions and standards. This cycle is a small testament to why America's Air Force is the world's most respected air and space force, and why the sky is the limit for the legend of the Thunderbirds."

– Staff Sgt. Josh Clendenen
(Thunderbirds Public Affairs)

Sleeve Barron: AMC's Newest Command Chief

On April 10, Chief Master Sgt. Joe "Sleeve" Barron (1995-98), reported for duty at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., as the command chief master sergeant for the Air Mobility Command.

As the AMC command chief, Chief Barron serves as the principal adviser to the AMC commander on all enlisted issues. His responsibilities include keeping the commander apprised of all matters concerning the health, morale and welfare of more than 43,000 enlisted members assigned to the command.

"It's an honor for me to be here. I'm thrilled to be a part of AMC, and I'm excited to serve with all of our fine Airmen across this great command," said Chief Barron.

Chief Barron reported for duty with AMC after a 16-month tour as the 2nd Air Force command chief master sergeant at Keesler AFB, Miss., where he helped the base recover following Hurricane Katrina.

"That was not fun," said the chief, who like many others lost his home, car and everything else. "But seeing our Airmen . . . before, during and after, and the way they responded . . . the way they came together . . . and the way our Airmen can get anything done no matter what the circumstances, made me want to serve another 30 years."

In addition to his three command chief positions and four 1st sergeant assignments, the chief's past experiences include special duty assignments with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and Air Force Recruiting Service. He said every job has enabled him to do the one



thing he loves the most - helping others.

"My main focus is to take care of the people. It's not about me or my goals. It's about our people, their families, their concerns and needs," he said. "That's where my primary focus is."

Taking care of people led Chief Barron to the 1st sergeant career field, and just 16 years after entering active duty, the newly promoted senior master sergeant was serving as 1st sergeant of the Thunderbirds.

"I am continually amazed by the quality and professionalism in our Air Force. The Thunderbirds continue to maintain the reputation as our true "Ambassadors" and I could not have been prouder to be a part of such an elite Team," Chief Barron said. "I will never forget the people and the experiences we shared. The professionals whom I had the pleasure of serving with while assigned to the Thunderbirds taught me so much, not only about the quality of our Airmen but the capabilities of our Air Force."

"I've always had the utmost respect for the Alumni," the chief continued. "We are the Team's history, and it is so great to know that there are fellow past Team members who care so much about the legacy we left behind." (*Chuck Ramey (Public affairs, 1994-98), contributed to this report*)

– Senior Master Sergeant Trish Freeland
(Air Mobility Command Public Affairs)

TBAA Board Selects New Officers, Directors

The TBAA Board of Directors has elected a new chairman, vice chairman and secretary and selected two new directors.

With the loss of Boss Patterakis, former TBAA Vice Chairman Jim Jannette (PAO, 1979-82) was asked to assume the duties as chairman through 2007. Jannette is chief of staff for the Space Foundation – one of the world's premier nonprofit organizations, supporting space activities, space professionals and education. Based in Colorado Springs, Colo., he is responsible for directing the day-to-day business operations of the 40-person organization and acting for the president and chief executive officer in his absence.

Retired Lt. Gen. Bob Beckel (Solo, 1966-67) is the TBAA's new vice chairman. A highly decorated combat veteran with more than 4,400 flying hours, he previously served as a TBAA board member from 1993-1996. General Beckel retired from active-duty in 1992 and works as a consultant. He resides in Riverside, Calif.

"I believe it is important to continue to support and maintain the present Team to ensure it remains the premier Air Demonstration Squadron on the planet while maintaining within the Association that sense of mission, pride, friendship and history we all felt while members of the Thunderbirds," the general said.

A freelance writer, Debby Baer-Becker (Public Affairs, 1981-83) was elected as the organization's new secretary following the recent resignation of Deborah Lyons. She and her family recently relocated from Calgary, Alberta, to Portland, Maine. Elected as a director in 2005, Baer-Becker is also serving as chairman for Reunion 007. She is also a regular contributor to *Thunder Rolls*.

"When I was being considered for the board, I told the election committee that we need board members who are committed, energetic and ready to serve," Baer-Becker said. "I am committed to the future success of the TBAA and feel its potential is without limit."

Joining the Board as directors are Jack Brown (Material Control/Assistant Crew Chief, 1975-77) and Mary "Sleeve" Kochel (First Sergeant, 1998-02).

A retired chief, Brown currently serves as a program manager and subject matter expert for Keane Federal Systems in Dayton, Ohio, where he oversees the company's bid process for multimillion dollar contracts.

"I feel it is my duty to be involved with the TBAA and use my skills to move the organization forward to increase its membership and participation," Brown said. "Ours is a legacy that should not be forgotten or ignored."

Shortly after joining the organization, Brown stepped in to be the TBAA's new membership chairman. "We need to ensure we give everyone the opportunity to be involved and come together and share that legacy," he said. "My goal is to increase membership and make the TBAA a place former and present Thunderbirds will want to join and be a part of."

Kochel, an active-duty chief master sergeant, is scheduled to retire Sept. 8. As of press time, she was serving as the public affairs resource manager for Air Education and Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. In this role, she is responsible for providing public affairs manning and training support to 13 bases, the Air Force Recruiting Service and Air University.

"The TBAA is a great organization and I really enjoyed working with the alumni during my time on the team," Kochel said. "If we can continue to support the current team and maintain positive relationships, a lot of great things can be accomplished."

Kochel has volunteered to assist with many TBAA projects including the planning and execution of the 2007 Reunion. Close with the teammates of her era, she also plans to devote some of her time in retirement to assisting with their internal communication efforts.

A full list of TBAA officers and directors is included on Page 7. Each person's e-mail address is listed and Alumni are encouraged to write with any questions, comments or concerns. The board is always looking for volunteers to assist with a myriad of committees and projects. If interested, please send an e-mail to any member.

– Chuck Ramey (Public Affairs, 1994-98)

Gone But Not Forgotten

James A. "Jim" Waugh (NDI, 1984-86), passed away July 5 following a motorcycle accident in Fort Worth, Texas. A memorial service took place July 10, and he was interred during a private ceremony at the National Cemetery in Grand Prairie, Texas. Family: Wife, Linda Waugh; daughters, Sarah and Anna Waugh. Address: 912 Alpine A, Crowley, TX 76036

Juan R. Williams (#7, #5, #8 Crew Chief, 1998-02) departed this life on April 7. Funeral services were held April 13 and he was interred at Newtown Cemetery in Harrisonburg, Va. At the time of his death, he was a technical sergeant serving as an aircraft maintenance instructor at Shaw Air Force Base, S. C. Family: Daughter, TaShon Williams; parents April Gwendolyn Brown and Raymond Carl Williams; paternal uncle and aunt, Calvin and Dawn Williams. The Williams family has established a trust fund for TaShon. Donations can be sent to TaShon Williams Trust Fund c/o Calvin Williams. Address: 43771 Mink Meadows St., South Riding, VA 20152.

Correction/Thank You

John T. "Tim" Matthews (Crew Chief, 1971-73) and (Quality Assurance, 1979-81) passed away Nov. 14. The family address listed in the March 2006 *Thunder Rolls* was incorrect. The correct address is: Elaine Matthews, 4461 El Oro Street, Las Vegas, NV 89121.

The Following Note Is From Mrs. Matthews:

"I would like to take just a moment to say a very sincere thank you to all the F-4 alumni and their spouses, who so graciously and thoughtfully remembered my husband, Tim Matthews, at the F-4 mini reunion this past November, with a toast and moment of silence. Tim so loved his two tours of duty spent on the Team. Those were the most special years of his Air Force career. I know he had planned to be there with all of you to share the memories, laughter and special camaraderie that only being a Thunderbird could mean. I cannot tell you how much it meant to me and my children, Chris and Michelle, to know you each took the time to sign a sympathy card and devoted a special time to his memory at that gathering. The appreciation of your kind words and knowing that you honored his memory cannot be fully expressed in words. I need you to know that I will always treasure your kindnesses, more than you could ever imagine. Please accept our deepest thank you."

Benchstock

Chris Alexander (Airlift Coordinator, 2001-04); **Brandy (Erven) Alexander** (Personnel, 2000-03) and **Ryan Dudgeon** (Airlift Coordinator, 2000-03) have recently arrived at Fort Bragg, N. C. All three are assigned to Joint Special Operations Command.

Dana Atkins (Left Wing, 1988-89) was promoted to major general June 15. He is the director of operations for the U.S. Pacific Command at Camp Smith, Hawaii.

Brian Bishop (Commander/Leader, 1998-99) has moved to Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington D.C., and is serving as the deputy director of the U.S. Air Force's Concept of Operations division.

Dean Coker (Engines, 1978-80) was recently promoted to director of flightline operations for Lockheed Martin in Fort Worth, Texas.

Mary "Sleeve" Kochel (1st Sergeant, 1998-02) will retire from active duty Sept. 8. A chief master sergeant, she is currently serving as the public affairs resource manager for Air Education and Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.

Jeff Remington (Solo 1988-89) has been selected for promotion to the rank of major general. He recently arrived at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, and is serving as special assistant to the commander, Pacific Air Forces.

Rob Thiel (Crew Chief, 1992-94) recently rejoined the Thunderbirds as the Team's chief enlisted manager.

Thunder Rolls

Credits

The USAF Thunderbirds Alumni Association publishes *Thunder Rolls*.

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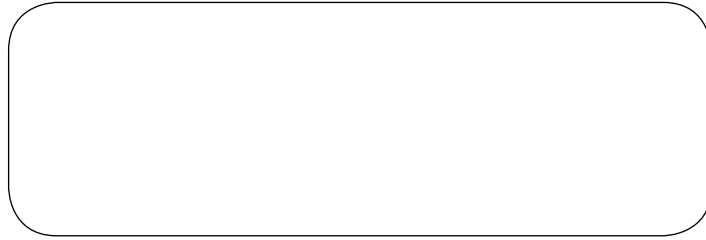
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