

THUNDERROLLS



Spring 2007
Volume 14

USAF Memorial Dedication

Team's Bomb Burst Inspires Newest Military Monument

On behalf of a grateful nation, President George W. Bush accepted the Air Force Memorial in a dedication ceremony in Washington, D.C., Oct. 14. The Thunderbirds' Bomb Burst maneuver inspired the design of the three spires of the memorial.

"A Soldier can walk the battlefields where he once fought," said President Bush. "A Marine can walk the beaches he once stormed, but an Airman can never visit the patch of sky he raced across to defend freedom. And so it is fitting that, from this day forward, the men and women of the Air Force will have this memorial.

"We commemorate today the courage of the men and women who wear the Air Force blue," said President Bush. "We remember those who gave their lives for their fellow Americans. We mourn their loss; we pray for their families; and we consecrate their legacy here today."

A huge crowd, which included H. Ross Perot and his son, H. Ross Perot Jr., who is chairman of the Air Force Memorial Foundation, attended the ceremony. Former Air Force chiefs, secretaries of the

Air Force, chief master sergeants of the Air Force, Air Force Medal of Honor recipients and their families also attended.

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Rodney J. McKinley spoke at the event, saying he was deeply honored to be a part of it. He reflected on the Airmen who serve today and their connection to the dedicated Airmen who served in the past.

"We have the most powerful air, space and cyberspace force in the world," he said. "This is a long overdue tribute to all those who are a part of this ongoing cycle of dedicated and talented Americans who serve in the Air Force."

A video was shown on huge screens with clips from pilots climbing into World War II bombers up to modern-day Airmen working in the sands of Iraq.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley spoke of several Airmen who made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom. He read an excerpt from a letter sent by Senior Airman Jason Cunningham, an Air Force para rescueman, to

The U.S. Air Force Aerial Demonstration Squadron "Thunderbirds" practice over the Air Force Memorial in Arlington, Va., in preparation for the dedication ceremony Oct. 14. Designed by the late James Ingo Freed, the memorial with its three soaring spires, inspired by the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds' Bomb Burst maneuver, pays tribute to and honors the patriotic men and women of the U.S. Air Force and its predecessor organizations. (U.S. Air Force photo/TSgt Justin D. Pyle)



Memorial continued

his wife, Theresa. He was killed in combat in Afghanistan in 2002. Sent on a rescue mission during Operation Anaconda, he and his party ran headlong into the battle of Takur Ghar. Before the fighting ended, seven men, including Cunningham, had died. But before receiving his mortal wounds, the Air Force para rescuer had saved 10 of his comrades, and for his extraordinary heroism, he was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross.

“As if aware of his impending death, he wrote, ‘I’ll die a happy man doing the job I love,’” read General Moseley. “Those are the words of a true PJ, and it speaks volumes of his commitment and dedication. We honor him with this memorial, as well as the countless others who are like him.”

Aircraft ranging from World War I biplanes to today’s stealth bombers and

fighters flew over the crowd and memorial in chronological order, providing visual evidence of the evolution of military flight. The flyover began with a Stearman PT-17 biplane and culminated with flyovers by a C-17 and B-2.

Among those in attendance was a retired Air Force colonel who wrote, “Just when we thought there wasn’t anything else that could top what had already taken place, the first lady of the United States was escorted to her seat, soon followed by the president.

“The crowd was wowed by a fly by performed by the Thunderbirds. But that was nothing,” the colonel said, “to what was yet to come. The Thunderbirds executed the Bomb Burst maneuver perfectly above the spires of the memorial. At the same time, the Air Force Band concluded its rousing rendition of ‘The Air Force Song.’

“What a finale,” he said. “There wasn’t a dry eye in the audience.”

Benchstock

Steve Chealander (Left Wing, 1982-85) has been sworn in as one of the five members of the National Transportation Safety Board. They oversee safety issues in the nation’s air and surface transportation systems.

Lennie Coleman (Right Wing, 1991-92) retired Dec. 1. Living in Colorado, he is working for DynCorp International out of Dallas.

John Posner (Right Wing, 1989-90) was promoted to brigadier general. He is the deputy director for Operations – Operations Team One, National Military Command Center, Joint Staff, The Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

Jeff Remington (Solo, 1988-89) was promoted to major general Aug. 2, 2006. He is the director of Air, Space and Information Operations, Plans and Requirements, Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

Chuck Simpson (Commander/Leader, 1990-91) retired as a major general Jan. 1, 2007. His last Air Force assignment was director, Requirements and Integration, Headquarters U.S. Joint Forces Command, Norfolk, Va.

Paul Stickland (Slot, 1991-92) retired last fall and is flying for Southwest Airlines out of Utah.

Johnny Weida (Slot, 1989-90) was promoted to major general May 26, 2006. He is the commander, Air Force Security Assistance Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

Lance Undhjem (Slot, 1986-88) has been nominated for promotion to brigadier general. He is currently the mobilization assistant to the commander of the Air Force Doctrine Center, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

Paul S. Duncan (Avionics, ACC #1, #3, #9, 1984-97) was recently promoted to manager, F-35 Manufacturing Test Engineering, for Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company in Fort Worth, Texas.

Carl Elder (Supply, 2000-03) has moved to Rota Naval Base, Spain, and is serving as the flight chief for the Forward Supply Operations Flight of the 725th Air Mobility Squadron.

Darryl Roberson (Left Wing, 1994-95) is now serving as the commander of the 52nd Fighter Wing, Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany.



Team Kicks Off Super Bowl XLI

The Thunderbirds performed a fly by of Dolphin Stadium during Super Bowl XLI in Miami.

The team’s red, white and blue F-16 Fighting Falcons flew their signature six-ship Delta formation at the conclusion of the national anthem, flying at approximately 500 feet and 450 mph.

“We were honored to participate in the Super Bowl, especially this year, as the U.S. Air Force commemorates our 60th anniversary,” said Lt. Col. Kevin Robbins, the Thunderbirds commander/leader.

The Super Bowl is the nation’s highest-rated TV program annually. According to the NFL, more than 141 million viewers in the United States tuned into last year’s game. Super Bowl XLI was broadcast to an estimated worldwide audience of 1 billion in more than 230 countries and territories.

Flying over the Super Bowl is just one of many events the Thunderbirds will participate in during 2007 to commemorate the Air Force’s six decades of air and space power.

From the Chairman

Happy New Year to each and every one of you! I hope this New Year brings great joy and good health to you and your loved ones.

We have much to look forward to this year with the 2007 Thunderbird team's new show season beginning in March and our "Thunderbirds Are Forever" 007 reunion scheduled for November 15-17 at the South Point Hotel in Las Vegas. "Thunderbirds Are Forever" recognizes our time on the team as an eight-second high-speed ride, compared to the time spent as alumni, which is, quite literally, a lifetime. Debby Baer-Becker will provide more reunion details.

Your board of directors has a major goal this year of giving every paying member of the TBAA a vote in the leadership of this organization. In the past, voting privileges were restricted to those members attending the General Membership Meeting at the biennial reunions.

Our proposal is this: We ask you first to vote on a change to the TBAA bylaws to allow us to conduct the nomination/application process and vote via mail.

The 2007 membership dues form will be mailed soon, and that package will include the ballot for the proposed change and a nomination/application form required to put 2008 board member nominations on the ballot.

If a majority of votes favor the bylaws change, we will start accepting nominations via application to the board.

Nominations with their mini-resumes will be included in the next issue of *Thunder Rolls* and posted at www.tbaa.org, and a ballot will be mailed for your vote. This application process ensures future board members bring specific skills needed on the board and that will benefit our membership.

Let us know your thoughts by e-mailing me at Jim@spacefoundation.org.

Here is our proposed timeline, assuming the membership approves the bylaws change:

Announce the intention of election by mail with receipt of *Thunder Rolls*

Request nominations via mail – April 1 to May 31

Receive nominations via mail – June 15

Review and evaluate nominations and construct ballot – June 30

Send out nomination slate for vote – July 15

Receive votes – September 15

Announce results at the reunion and in the next *Thunder Rolls* issue

Although "Once a Thunderbird, Always a Thunderbird" holds true and each successful team member is considered a member of our organization, too many members are inactive.

We need each active member to take on a special mission for the 007 reunion event: recruit your fellow team members who are inactive and encourage them to attend.

You don't have to be James Bond to accomplish this mission, but you might consider yourself a special agent for membership.

"You Only Live Twice" with this organization: once with the team and again through the TBAA. There are fewer than 2,200 people who have worn or who are wearing the patch. We are the legacy.

It's a special mission, not always an easy one, but one that guarantees lifetime friendships.

In order to facilitate active membership recruiting, our board voted to remove the monetary "reprimand" for inactive members. This change means your teammates can join and become active members for \$30 a year.

It is our hope that this change will help to increase our membership size, but it will not happen without your help.

In an unintentional oversight, our last issue of *Thunder Rolls* did not share with you the passing of former TBAA chairman and Thunderbird John Lapointe (Left Wing, 1976-78), who died April 7, 2006, following an automobile accident. Those of us who had the pleasure of knowing Johnny recognized that he was a passionate man . . . for his wonderful wife, Melanie; his daughter, Hillary; his country; his Air Force; and his beloved Thunderbirds. A tribute from his widow, Melanie, appears in this issue.

Active commitment keeps this organization vibrant and growing. In addition to our 11 board members, we do well because of our volunteers. Some of our best board members were TBAA volunteers first.

We are looking for writers for our communications committee and helpers for reunion. Please fulfill your New Year's resolution to get more involved by e-mailing me with your volunteer commitment.



Jim Jannette, Chairman
(PAO, 1979-82)



Thunderbirds Announce 2007 Show Season

The Thunderbirds have announced the 2007 airshow schedule, which includes more than 68 shows in 21 states and nine European countries.

"The entire team is excited to announce our schedule for 2007," said Lt. Col. Kevin Robbins, commander/leader. "The Thunderbirds' motto is 'Ambassadors in Blue' . . . in the truest sense of those words, this year we'll be able to bring the message of every hardworking Airman to thousands of people around the world."

The second-year commander said his team is ready to take the Airman's story abroad.

"We are well aware this is a time of conflict for our nation; yet it is important to take the time to display the true nature of our armed forces, both to allies and foes," Colonel Robbins said. "We look forward to illustrating the dedication, commitment and humility our Airmen display in their jobs each day, both at home and overseas."

The Thunderbirds will also commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Air Force throughout their 2007 season.

"We are representing six decades of air dominance this year," Colonel Robbins said. "The Air Force and Thunderbirds of today

uphold the pride and professionalism that millions of Airmen have displayed for 60 years."

The 2007 team includes the nation's first female jet demonstration pilot and the team's first female solo pilot.

Maj. Nicole Malachowski returns as Thunderbird No. 3, and Maj. Samantha Weeks is Thunderbird No. 6.

The 2007 Thunderbirds' officers include:

Lt. Col. Kevin Robbins, Commander/Leader

Maj. Chris Austin, Left Wing

Maj. Nicole Malachowski, Right Wing

Maj. Scott Poteet, Slot

Maj. Ed Casey, Lead Solo

Maj. Samantha Weeks, Opposing Solo

Maj. Rob Skelton, Operations Officer

Maj. Tad Clark, Advance Pilot/Narrator

Maj. (Dr.) Dan Mirski, Flight Surgeon

Capt. Amy Glisson, Executive Officer

Capt. Charles Ploetz, Maintenance Officer

Capt. Elizabeth Kreft, Public Affairs Officer

March

24-25 Luke Air Force Base, Ariz.

31 Point Mugu Naval Base, Calif.

April

1 Point Mugu Naval Base, Calif.

14-15 Eglin AFB, Fla.

21-22 Barksdale AFB, La.

28-29 Langley AFB, Va.

May

5-6 Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

12-13 McGuire AFB, N.J.

19-20 Andrews AFB, Md.

26-27 Wantagh (Jones Beach), N.Y.

30 U.S. Air Force Academy, Colo.

(Invitation Only)

June

2-3 Davenport, Iowa

9-10 Sacramento, Calif.

16-17 Pittsburgh, Pa.

24 Galway, Ireland

26 Krzesiny Air Base, Poland

28 Mihail Kogalniceanu, Romania

30 Ankara, Turkey

July

1 Graf Ignatievo, Bulgaria

4 Aviano AB, Italy

7-8 Evreux Field, France

14-15 RAF Fairford, U.K.

25 Cheyenne, Wyo.

28-29 Dayton, Ohio

August

11-12 Niagara Falls, N.Y.

15 Atlantic City, N.J.

18-19 Chicago, Ill.

25-26 Otis Air National Guard Base, Mass.

September

1-3 Cleveland, Ohio

8 Minot AFB, N.D.

15 Hickam AFB, Hawaii

22-23 El Paso, Texas

29-30 Columbus, Ohio

October

6-7 Pope AFB, N.C.

13-14 Miramar Marine Corps

Air Station, Calif.

20-21 Moody AFB, Ga.

27-28 New Orleans, La.

November

3-4 NASA, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

10-11 Nellis AFB, Nev.

Team Documentary Airs in April

The new documentary *America's Team – Being a USAF Thunderbird* premieres nationwide on public television beginning in April.

Viewers will see historical archive footage of the Thunderbirds, from their beginning to 2006. The film crew spent eight months on the road with the 2006 team.

America's Team will broadcast through 350 public television

affiliate stations nationwide. It will also be available on DVD, as well as being sold through major store chains nationwide.

Honorary Thunderbird John Campbell, Campbell Media Group, produced and directed this amazing documentary.

A three-minute trailer is available for viewing at: www.YouTube.com. Type "America's Team" in the search field to call up the trailer.



Major Completes First Season With Thunderbirds

Maj. Nicole Malachowski autographs a Thunderbird brochure for Arch Montgomery, a patient at Belleville Memorial Hospital, during the 2006 season. The Thunderbird pilot flies the No. 3 jet as the right wing in the Diamond formation. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Kristi Machado)

From the Boss

2006 Team Has Unique, Successful Season

There were a few unique accomplishments in 2006, but overall it was another successful year of doing what the Thunderbirds do: represent the world's finest Airmen who serve in the world's finest Air Force.

Brig. Gen. William Rew, 57th Wing commander, said "I received a tremendous amount of unsolicited, overwhelmingly positive feedback about this year's team from my fellow wing commanders around the Air Force."

In terms of safety, the team had zero class A, B or C mishaps during the entire season, making it one of the safest seasons in the team's history.

As for media coverage, the team received more than any team in recent memory. There were features on *Good Morning America*, *The Today Show*, CNN, ESPN, FOX news and an appearance on *USA Today's Weekend Edition*.

Like in seasons past, the celebrity attention did not wane either. Big names like comedian Bill Engvall, pro skateboarder Bob Burnquist, San Diego Chargers' wide receiver Eric Parker and ESPN rodeo analyst Don Gay all experienced the ride of a lifetime in the back of the F-16D.

Much of the media attention can be attributed to Maj. Nicole Malachowski, the first female pilot on the Thunderbirds or on any U.S. military jet team. She did a phenomenal job handling the media and flying a great right wing.

The left wing was unique this year as well. Maj. Scottie Zamzow, the 2005 lead solo, stayed a third year when Maj. Rusty

Keen was released for medical reasons. Scottie is only the third Thunderbird to fly three different positions on the team.

Some notable stops along the way for this year's Thunderbirds were the 4,000th airshow at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., the dedication fly by and Bomb Burst for the Air Force Memorial dedication in Washington, D.C., the inaugural Air Force Week in St. Louis and the joint show with the Blue Angels in Atlantic City.

We were honored to execute a couple of once-in-a-lifetime opportunities this year. Highlights in Washington, D.C., included a trip to the Oval Office, a public relations event at the Air and Space Museum and tours of the CIA and U.S. Capitol.

Overall, the Thunderbirds had a fantastic 2006 season. It culminated with an end-of-year banquet at Red Rock Station Casino with Staff Sgt. Chris

Kobaly winning the Fitzgerald Award.

The team is already hard at work training for 2007.

There will be a month-long European tour, as well as many huge stateside venues like Chicago, New York, Fort Lauderdale and Waikiki Beach.

We feel the enormous burden of representing our brothers and sisters in arms accurately. We will give everything we have again in 2007 to make sure we do it right.

– Lt. Col. Kevin Robbins
Commander/Leader



2007

Bond Theme Highlights

Alumni Reunion Nov. 15-18

Plans are in full swing for this year's Thunderbirds Alumni Association Reunion Nov. 15-18 in Las Vegas.

Using a James Bond 007 theme, "Thunderbirds Are Forever" will be hosted by the South Point Hotel, formerly the South Coast Hotel.

Reunion chairperson Debby Becker and co-chair Brock McMahon want everyone to know that each decision will be made with the alumni in mind.



Honor old friendships.

"Boss Patterakis tasked us in early 2006 to make this event both fun and affordable," said Debby. "We will honor his request and go one step further to make the event memorable too."

Since Las Vegas is the busiest convention city in the country, they broke out of the gate early last year to secure a "nest" for the flock to gather.

"After surveying all of the major strip hotels," she said, "we found the right fit at the South Point Hotel." The room rate will be \$99 per night.

"The new, nicely appointed rooms feature plasma TVs and plenty of living space," Debby said. "Convention facilities are



Red is the new black.



Generation gap – bridged!

first-class. The hotel's fun, family-style ambiance, along with their friendly staff, will ensure that your stay with them will be a relaxing one."

Attendees should book their room early, ahead of the RSVP date. The special \$99-per-night reunion rate won't be available after Oct. 24.

A number of activities are planned for the reunion. They include:

- The "007 Die Another Day" golf tournament for alumni golfers
- A hangar visit in the late afternoon, with teams competing at the first "Thunderbowl" later that night in the South Point Hotel
- The 2007 team's airshow, *A View to a Thrill*
- Officer's Call at the Nellis Officer's Club and NCO Call at the Nellis NCO Club
- A "Shaken, Not Stirred" cocktail party at the hotel where reunion guests are encouraged to dress as their favorite James Bond movie character
- A Saturday-morning business meeting, leaving the afternoon open for Vegas-style activities

Reunion activities will culminate Saturday evening with the "Thunderbirds Are Forever" gala celebration. Attendees will celebrate friendships, honor some old traditions and raise the curtain for first-class entertainment by the Air Force's *Tops In Blue*.

Watch for details on the TBAA Web site, www.tbaa.org, and in the next *Thunder Rolls*.

THUNDERBIRDS ARE FOREVER

Gone But Not Forgotten

CMSgt Phil Vollmoeller (Egress, 1969-72) died Feb. 1, 2007. Condolences can be sent to the Vollmoeller family at 2454 Desert Hills Drive, Alamogordo, NM 88310.

John Lapointe (Left Wing, 1976-78), former TBAA chairman and Thunderbird, passed away April 7, 2006.

His wife, Melanie, shares this from her tribute to John at his memorial service.

"I married a man of passion. John was passionate about flying. He was passionate about what was right – and went to the mat for any number of his friends and squadron mates, even if it was not politically correct and could hurt his career. It just didn't matter.

"He was especially passionate about our country. He cried every time he heard 'The Star Spangled Banner' or saw the team fly. Face it, he could cry over a good steak or an orange sunset.

"The Thunderbirds had gone from F-4s back to T-38s because of the gas crunch. John wanted to try out for the team. We had watched the Thunderbirds for years.

"John made the elite Air Force demonstration team on his first try. When he called home he said, 'I made the Thunderbirds.' So I asked him how do you feel? He answered, 'Like Miss America.'

"This was our first real 'Air Force family' – Vicki, Kay, Walter, Alice, Lacey, Fig, Dottie and Bobbie, Joe and Lynda. Every time the team came home, we were always there on the tarmac waiting for the jets. Hill would run to her dad (don't step on his boots). He would scoop her up and come over and kiss me (what a feeling).

"In 1977, Dan and Syl came on board as our new Boss. The team was closer than ever. We had tons of laughs and a lot of tears. Friendships were made that will last forever."

Friends can e-mail the Lapointe family at MelanieLapointe@cox.net.

Joan Kerby

It was 1982, and in less than one year, we had suffered the loss of six Thunderbird pilots. With the team's future at stake, the devotion of the Thunderbirds' alumni became a critical part of the re-creation of this beloved organization in an unprecedented way.

Some of that love and energy came from Joan Kerby.

Wife of former Thunderbird and then-57th Fighter Weapons Wing Commander, Maj. Gen. Mike Kerby, Joan's devotion to the 1982-83 teams made a difference.

She was unique in her very approachable manner, and she encouraged us with her presence and caring words. Her disarming sense of humor gained her many team friends and admirers.

As the years passed, Joan could be seen on Mike's arm at each Thunderbird reunion event. She always had a kind word for me and my fellow team members, and I was always impressed that she remembered each of us.

In return, we will remember Joan Kerby as one whose commitment made the difference to the 1982 and 1983 Thunderbirds teams.

Joan passed away Dec. 28, 2006.

– Submitted by Debby Becker,
on behalf of the members of the
1982 and 1983 Thunderbirds teams

Thunder Rolls

Credits

The USAF Thunderbirds Alumni Association publishes *Thunder Rolls*.

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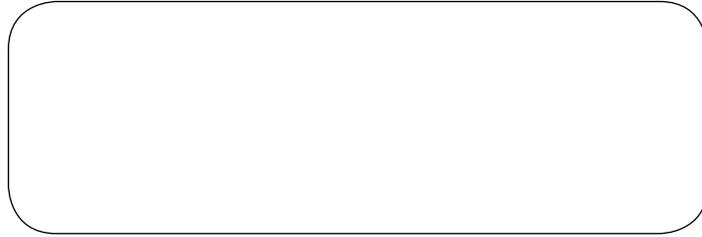
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THUNDERBIRDS

THE USAF THUNDERBIRDS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Thunderbirds Visit Youth Camp
Maj. Brian Farrar and Staff Sgt. Justin McCormick of the Thunderbirds answer questions about what it is like to be in the Air Force and be a Thunderbird. Major Farrar was the lead solo last year; Sergeant McCormick was his crew chief. The camp visit was part of Air Force Week community activities in the St. Louis area. (U.S. Air Force photo/Master Sgt. Jack Braden)