

# THUNDER ROLLS



Summer 2005  
Volume 10

## Former Thunderbird Searches for Phantoms

**MacDill AFB, Fla. (AFP)** – From the roar of the jet engines to the rumble of a motorcycle, one former Thunderbird cannot get enough of life on the road.

Retired Col Gary Younglove, retired administrative officer for the U.S. Air Force Aerial Demonstration Squadron, made his first stop here recently on a nationwide journey to visit each of the original F-4 Phantom Thunderbirds, one of which is on display here.

It began in Monett, Mo., where Colonel Younglove was visiting “Ole No. 3.” There, Michael Jacobssen, the unofficial historian of the F-4 era, told him there are nine still around.

“My number on the team was nine. There are nine F-4Es still around. My mind started clicking. I could, as No. 9, visit all nine aircraft and pay my respects,” said Colonel Younglove, who began riding his motorcycle in 2003. “I realized this may be a major trip, but I have only one life to live.”

As the administrative officer, he was not assigned to any particular aircraft on the team and was able to ride in all of the aircraft during his tour 1970 to 1972.

“I’ve actually been in the back of this airplane when it was with the Thunderbirds,” Colonel Younglove said.

Thunderbird No. 1 has a rich history including assignments here in 1968 and again in 1975. Its highest profile assignment was 1969 to 1973, when it flew in the lead position for the Thunderbirds. It has been on display here since 1985.

The Phantom was the first multi-service aircraft, flying at the same time with the Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy. It is the first and only aircraft flown concurrently by both the Thunderbirds and the Navy’s Blue Angels, officials said.

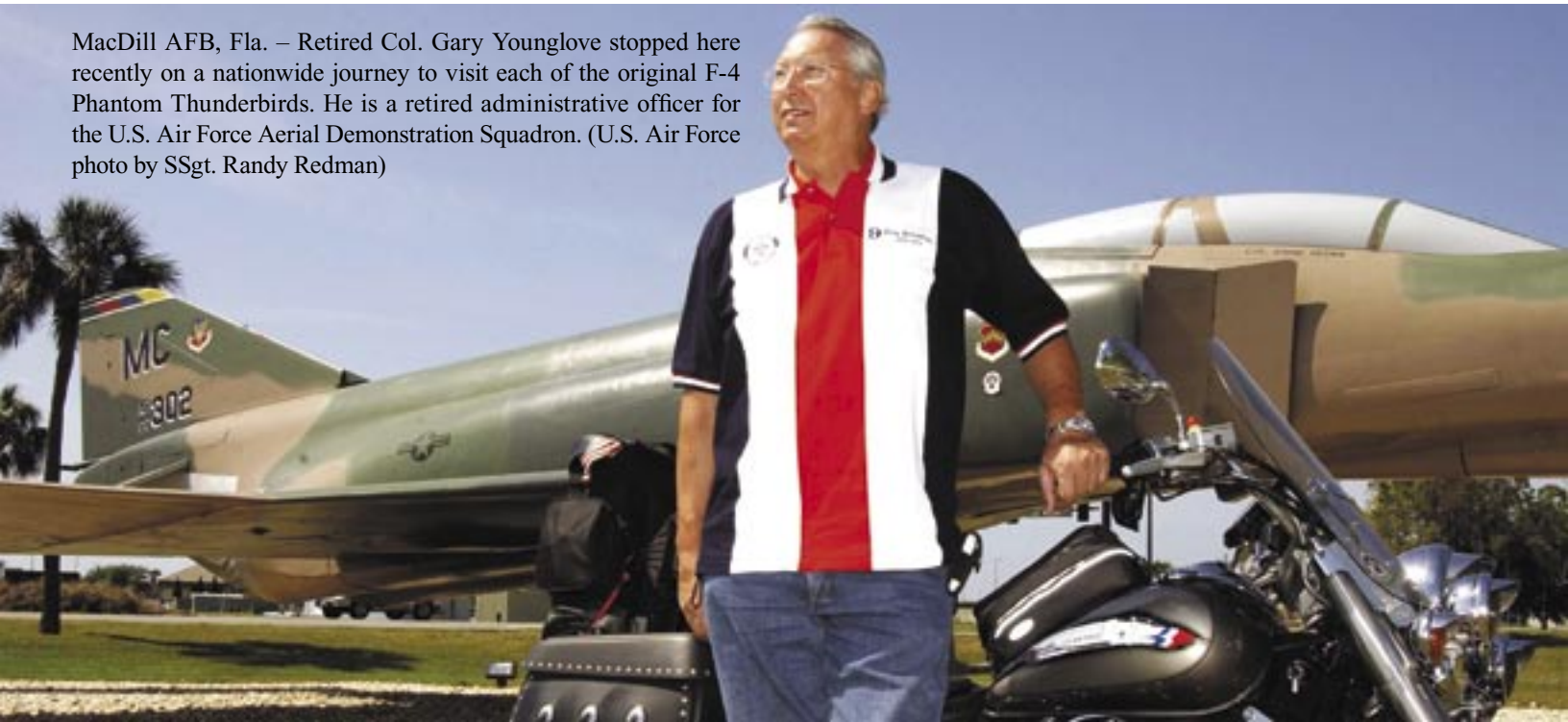
The Air Force used 11 aircraft during that period. Two of the aircraft were lost in crashes. The remaining aircraft still exist, and seven of them are on display around the United States. The other two are stored at the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

Colonel Younglove will travel about 7,200 miles on his trip, visiting Athens, Tenn.; Atwater, Calif.; Battle Mountain, Nev.; and Vail, Ariz.

On his way out the gate toward Tennessee, Colonel Younglove was all smiles and gave big thumbs up. Colonel Younglove maintains a Web site dedicated to documenting his journey at [www.gdyounglove.net/thunderbirdsondisplay/index.htm](http://www.gdyounglove.net/thunderbirdsondisplay/index.htm).

– By SSgt Randy Redman, 6th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs

MacDill AFB, Fla. – Retired Col. Gary Younglove stopped here recently on a nationwide journey to visit each of the original F-4 Phantom Thunderbirds. He is a retired administrative officer for the U.S. Air Force Aerial Demonstration Squadron. (U.S. Air Force photo by SSgt. Randy Redman)



# A Family Tradition of Excellence



Justin in full JRTOC dress uniform.



Randy Gardner polishing the #7 aircraft, 1984.

Justin had to dig deep to meet his goals.

Justin's dad, Randy (Thunderbird Crew Chief #7, 1984-87), died on Sept. 4, 2004. Two days later Justin began his senior year of high school. Since his dad's death, Justin has pitched in to help his mother, Lori, and younger brother, Jason. Randy and Lori inspired Justin and cultivated a sense of



Current and future Thunderbird officers! Jason, Justin, and "Boss" Mike Chandler, Langley AFB, Va.

the TBAA by taking over as Webmaster of the Thunderbirds 50 Web site.

Justin's mom, Lori says, "I am in awe of this child." Lori, we are too. Congratulations, Justin! We're very proud of you.

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

All of us take the seeds of the Thunderbird legacy from our team experience and share them with our family, friends, and community. These are the seeds that sow a desire for excellence, a drive to exceed our best efforts, a pride in the honor of serving our country. These seeds of the Thunderbird legacy are blooming in one Thunderbird's son, Justin Gardner.

Justin, son of the late Randy and Lori Gardner, entered the U.S. Air Force Academy on June 30, 2005. His 3.9 high school GPA earned his acceptance to all three military academies and numerous prestigious universities.

Justin has dreamed of becoming an Air Force pilot since the ninth grade. He's attained the highest goals an individual can reach in the Junior ROTC, Boy Scouts, high school and community academic awards. Justin continues to reach for the stars

and has set a new goal:

to become a Thunderbird pilot by 2017. But Justin had to dig deep to meet his goals.

honor, love of country, duty, tradition and leadership. In spite of his tremendous grief, Justin went on to achieve academic excellence and numerous awards. His JROTC, school, and Boy Scout community service projects fed the homeless, cleaned up city parks and raised inventories at both the local food and blood banks. He served on color guards for both his school and the American Legion. He carried on his father's service to



Justin's Boy Scout years brought him many awards.



Jason, Randy, and Justin Gardner in full military regalia.

# 2005 Reunion

As the 2005 Thunderbirds Reunion nears, the Thunderbirds Alumni Association and the volunteers on the reunion committee are busy incorporating your ideas and suggestions. This year's reunion allows the TBAA to help the team and the entire Las Vegas community mark the beginning of the Thunderbirds' celebration of its historic 50th year at Nellis AFB, Nev.

The reunion this year, "Celebrating 50 Years at Nellis AFB, Nev.," is a homecoming of sorts, particularly with the return of the reunion golf tournament to Nellis and a repeat performance of last reunion's successful Thursday evening reception at the Thunderbird Hangar. In addition to some of the customary reunion activities from years past, we are providing more opportunities for interaction among brother and sister Thunderbirds from the same eras.

First, instead of a Friday night cocktail reception, the TBAA is encouraging smaller 'mini reunions' – gatherings of people from specific eras and smaller receptions organized by persons from the same team. With receptions already scheduled Thursday in the Thunderbirds hangar, Friday afternoon at the Officers' and NCO Clubs, and at the Las Vegas Hilton on Saturday evening, the TBAA and the reunion committee feel that reserving Friday night for smaller team reunions and era-specific reunions (i.e., F-84, F-4, T-38, or by Commander/Leader or era) will increase members' ability to spend some relaxed time with the people who mean the most to them.

Secondly, the TBAA will host a symposium on Saturday morning prior to the traditional TBAA business meeting and elections. The moderated discussion titled, "Thunderbirds: A Flight Through History," will allow a panel of a distinguished Thunderbirds to share stories and lively Q&A with active TBAA alumni members about their greatest moments on the team and those well known (and not so well known) events that shaped the history and culture of the Thunderbirds.

Finally, in response to suggestions from previous reunions, the Saturday evening banquet will be preceded by an extended cocktail reception. This will allow you increased time with past teammates and friends.

All these activities, particularly the new reunion initiatives, are designed to be responsive to members' desires, to help keep members' reunion costs manageable, and promote greater camaraderie among former teammates and among all Thunderbirds.

The TBAA Board of Directors and the reunion committee look forward to seeing you in November. Come home to Nellis and help the TBAA celebrate 50 years of mutual friendship among the Thunderbirds, Nellis Air Force Base and the entire Las Vegas community.

For latest reunion details, go to [www.tbaareunion.com](http://www.tbaareunion.com).

When: Nov. 17-19, 2005

Where: Las Vegas Hilton

(800-732-7117, Group Code: Thunderbirds Alumni Association)

Reunion Partners:

American Airlines (800-433-1790, Group Code: A86N5AH)

Hertz (800-654-2240, Group Code: CV022J1545)

– By the TBAA Board of Directors

## From the Chairman

### IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FOR THUNDERBIRDS

Why am I a member of the TBAA?

What's in it for me to stay active in our alumni association?

Or said another way:

Why am I not an active member of the TBAA?

What is wrong with the TBAA that causes me to distance myself and remain inactive?

These are tough questions that we need real answers to. The reason these questions seem so hard to most of us is that we never gave it a second thought about joining the TBAA. It was automatic because you knew you wanted to preserve the opportunity to relive that special time in your life, interact once again with your friends and teammates and support the institution, the USAF Thunderbirds, that has meant so much to all of us.

It's almost unbelievable to me that someone would choose to distance themselves from this unique opportunity, but that is the situation we are faced with today. Only 36 percent of eligible Thunderbirds are active in the TBAA. I know we can do better than that.

Now don't get me wrong. The TBAA is doing well. We have more active members and are in better financial condition than at any time in our history, but with your help, we can be so much better. Here is what you can do:

- Write to me and share your thoughts on how we can best attack this issue ([dancherry@insightbb.com](mailto:dancherry@insightbb.com)).
- Check the new directory for your teammates and contact them to encourage active membership. If you need a directory, contact us, and we will send you one. Remember, for this year only, an inactive member can become active with no penalty by simply paying the \$30 annual fee, even if they have been inactive for a number of years.
- Make definite plans to attend reunion in November and encourage all you know to do the same. This year we plan lots of time for Team-specific events, such as dinners, receptions, parties, etc., so please do your part to encourage and organize these events for your Team.

Membership is everything to an organization like the TBAA, and we need more of our lost teammates back in the fold. Please help us make it happen.

Sincerely,

Dan Cherry, Chairman  
(Commander/Leader 1977-78)



## Dick Pfeiffer - Our TBAA Treasure!

Dick Pfeiffer, TBAA treasurer, has served on the board since November 2000. He's kept us in good stead with the bill paying and membership dues, built an alumni database which keeps us connected, worked reunions and been essential to our many successes. Dick Pfeiffer is a TBAA treasure.

In 1975, Pfeiffer came to the Thunderbirds from the SR-71 program at Beale AFB, Calif. As a no-patcher, he drew the ire of the boys when spotted refueling a jet while eating a hot dog (SOP with the 71s). Against all odds, Dick earned his way to crew for "Boss" Chris Patterakis.



Pfeiffer's flying the C-141, much to the consternation of the Boys (Dave Frymire, in particular).

Dick's intuition for flying produced the occasional backseat chuckle on any less-than-stellar landing by #1. Dick's keen ability to read his pilot was essential to his close relationship with "Boss" Patterakis who quips, "It's like we were married!"

The desire to fly took hold in Dick. After leaving the team, he became a flight instructor and corporate pilot flying Learjet, Westwind, and Citation aircraft. Today, he's backseat again performing flight simulator instruction in the Lear.

Dick has been actively supporting the team since 1975. When asked how he enjoyed his Thunderbird experience, Dick replies, "I'll let you know when it's over." Of Dick's dedication, "Boss" Patterakis says, "If I had to give Dick Pfeiffer a 5-star rating - I'd give him a 7!"

**Editor's Note:** This is the first in an on-going series of mini features on our board members.

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



Dick with his current aircraft, the Learjet simulator.

# President Bush Appoints General Lloyd "Fig" Newton to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission

Even as a child growing up in Ridgeland, South Carolina, Gen Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton, USAF (Retired) (Narrator, Slot, Right Wing, 1975-78), was drawn to the military world. "There was always a lot of military in that area," said Newton, who at 62 has been retired for four years from the Air Force, where he logged 4,000 flying hours in seven aircraft throughout his 34-year career.

"During those days in Ridgeland, a number of GIs used to hitchhike, and my dad would pick them up," Newton said of his father, who was a farmer. "I became fascinated with their uniforms and other things, and it was during those days that I decided I wanted to go and serve in the military."

Fast forward nearly four decades later, and Newton is again being asked to serve his country. But this time, he won't be pushing an F-15 to rates that are twice the speed of sound.

President Bush appointed Newton on April 1 to the nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission that reviews the Department of Defense's list of base closure recommendations.

"The BRAC Commission is vital to ensuring the continued strength and vitality of our military and national security, and General Newton's unique blend of experience qualify him for this strategically critical post," Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, M.D. (R-TN), commented.

"I'm pleased that President Bush accepted my recommendation to appoint General Newton to the BRAC Commission. And I'm confident that he'll be a tremendous asset for the commission, the military and the American people," stated Senator Frist.

Fig commented, "Even though this is probably a job that one would not volunteer for, it is extremely important to our national defense, and I am pleased to serve the nation."

General Newton currently serves as Executive Vice President for Military Engines, Pratt & Whitney.

– Dee Pfeiffer (Materiel Control & Assistant Crew Chief #4, 1976-77)

# Thunderbirds Senior Mentor

General Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton was recently appointed by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the ACC Commander to the position of "USAF Thunderbirds Senior Mentor." In this position, Gen. Newton provides guidance and advice to the USAF Thunderbird Command/Leader and the Team as appropriate and serves as a consultant to the CSAF.

Fig recently stated, "I was deeply honored and humbled when General Jumper asked me to take the position. I am always pleased to help and support the well-being of the Team. Today's Team represents all Thunderbirds past and present as well as the USAF. I want to do everything possible to help ensure they are the absolute best they can be."

– Dee Pfeiffer (Materiel Control & Assistant Crew Chief #4, 1976-77)

# Interested in Serving on the TBAA Board of Directors?

During the business meeting at this year's Reunion, the membership will be selecting a new Chairman of the Board, board members and officers to serve for the next two years. Boss Cherry has asked me to solicit the names of those who would be interested in serving on the board.

As alumni, we have all gained personally and professionally from our experience on the team. Serving as a board member is an excellent opportunity to provide value back to the Thunderbirds and our board.

When I was selected as a board member at the 2000 reunion, I was initially concerned that my job would preclude my being able to fully participate in board activities. I have found that this has not been a problem. Most all of our meetings are conducted via teleconference, making it convenient for all concerned (it does impinge on Gill Mook's golf once a quarter, however). I have found board membership to be both interesting and rewarding.

If you are interested in serving as a board member, please drop me a note at [james.d.latham@lmco.com](mailto:james.d.latham@lmco.com) or give me a call at (817) 777-4700 during the day or (817) 419-3396 in the evening.

– Jim Latham (Right Wing Commander/Leader, 1978-81, 1983)

## Last F-16 Delivery

Can you believe it? The last production F-16 has been delivered! It was delivered to Shaw AFB, S.C., on March 18. The first one was way back in 1978. To read the Air Force press release and Brig Gen Jeff Riemer's (former F-16 SPD, who had the honor of delivering the last one) message to the alumni, go to [www.f16alumni.org](http://www.f16alumni.org).

## Air Force Memorial, Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Edward C. "Pete" Aldridge, Jr., former Secretary of the Air Force, has asked all of us to support the Air Force Memorial planned for Washington, D.C. The Air Force is the only service without a memorial in Washington, so now is the time to reach out and support this effort. Donations for the Air Force Memorial may be made to the Air Force Memorial Foundation online at [www.airforcememorial.org](http://www.airforcememorial.org) or by calling (703) 247-5808. The Foundation is an authorized 501 (c) (3), and your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

# In These Halls...

What seems like a routine day sometimes turns out to be anything but routine.

On what seemed like a routine day in 1975, Bob Gore (Information Officer, 1974-76) and Dennis Laughlin (Graphics Illustrator, 1974-76) found an old wooden plank in the Nevada desert near Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. They had no immediate use for what looked like an old bomb crate. But they decided to keep it just in case they could ever use it for something.

Little did they know what that something would be.

Whether it is something that a Thunderbird pilot or maintainer says to a young Air Force recruit, or something that a Thunderbirds public affairs professional writes about the squadron, each day affords a Thunderbird the opportunity to do something unique to positively impact the lives of countless people – in some cases, for decades to come.

For Gore and Laughlin, something was about to happen that would forever touch the lives of all Thunderbirds. Something was about to happen that would be an enduring testament to the professionalism of the team, the pride of the people who wear the Thunderbirds patch, and the “can do” spirit that is the Thunderbirds.

The year 1975 was like most others for the Thunderbird public affairs staff, then known as the Information Office (I/O). As during any year for the Thunderbirds, the I/O professionals were thoroughly occupied with producing an incalculable number of media kits, promotional pieces, magazine stories, trade publication articles and other periodicals.

Of all the promotional publications, articles, biographies, and photo captions written that year or in any year, Bob Gore wrote something on a routine day in 1975 that continues to rise above all else. The true excellence of the Thunderbirds is normally indescribable. But on that day in 1975, Bob Gore nailed it.

In an article for a magazine in 1975, Gore wrote, “In these halls you will find mirrored an honest pride... an almost unbelievable attention to detail... and a spirit of achievement that touches and inspires everything that is done here.”

Gore did not notice anything special at the time. He shouldn't have. Every word of every paragraph of every article generated by

Thunderbirds public affairs is always supposed to be first-rate. Just like everyone else on the 1975 team, Gore was so surrounded by the entire Thunderbird team's excellence and attention to detail that he would never have paused to recognize anything special about his own work. It was just his craft – and the Thunderbirds team concept would naturally prevent attracting attention to an individual. But there was something exceedingly special about what Gore had written that day.

Chris Patterakis (Commander/Leader, 1975-76) recognized that Gore had penned a precise, timeless description of Thunderbirds excellence and asked Gore to somehow showcase it – for all to see. Designed by Dennis Laughlin on that old wooden plank that he and Gore had found in the Nevada desert, the quote quickly became a fixture at the entrance to the Thunderbirds hangar. But in 1975, neither Gore nor Laughlin knew the significance of what they had created.

Fast-forward 30 years.

That old wooden plank from the Nevada desert still hangs on display at the entrance to the Thunderbirds squadron – for all to see. Three decades after it was completed, the plank still greets school children, heads of state, military leaders and aviation enthusiasts alike.

Since 1975, few words have been written that describe the Thunderbirds and the team's home at Nellis Air Force Base with better accuracy than what Bob Gore wrote that day. His powerful statement epitomizes everything about the remarkable spirit of excellence that was and remains today the hallmark of the Thunderbirds.

For Bob Gore and Dennis Laughlin, it may have just been a routine day. But for any member of the U.S. Air Force who is striving for excellence in everything they do, what might seem like a routine day can often have long-lasting positive impact on countless people – for years and decades to come.

– By Chris Allen (1988-91)

## Web Site Update

Good news about our Web site. The renovation of our Web site is well under way, and when it's completed, it's going to be great. We'll keep you posted on our progress, but it should be ready later this summer just in time for Reunion news and updates.



## Out of the Past

Ready to “step out” for the evening, “Boss” Dan Cherry and members of the 1977 Team show off their coordinated Yves St. Laurent suits at the Holiday Inn, Goldsboro, N.C. Joining “Boss” Cherry are from left Joe Prater, “Fig” Newton, Walt Parker, John Lapointe, Lacy Veach (deceased) and Charlie Carter (deceased). If you have an interesting photo for “Out of the Past,” send it to Ken Hoffman at [orca8489@aol.com](mailto:orca8489@aol.com). Include full names, date and what was happening when the photo was taken.



## Support a Thunderbirds Unique License Plate

For the first time in the Team's history, a Thunderbirds unique license plate may be made available. To support this idea, please send your name, address and signature to the Team's Public Affairs office at 4445 Tyndall Ave., Nellis AFB, NV 89191-6079. By doing this, the Team will add your name to the Department of Motor Vehicles petition.

## Growing Up With Two-Too

We first learned of Two-Too Pfeiffer's assignment to crew Thunderbird One when the photo processor returned fuzzy photos. But only Thunderbird One was fuzzy. Dave Frymire (CC, #3) said that One's new crew chief used sandpaper and chocolate bars to buff his airplane. "It was a test," Frymire quoted Pfeiffer.

We became very good at airbrushing Thunderbird One out of our photos and inserting another jet. If you look hard at the pictures from that time, Doug Roach is flying both One and Four.

Two-Too and I parted ways off the Team. He married Dee Holloway, who was so desperate to stop his begging and slobbering that she agreed to marry him. It cured the slobbering.

Two-Too and I met again when we joined the TBAA board. It was our exchange of emails where his persona transitioned to that of... a man of letters. Allow me to quote one of his emails:

*"Dear Bob,*

*I, two, am to happy too think that I'm a member of the board, and that makes to of us, two. They're exists a possibility that the too of us can make some good changes two how there operating things over their.*

*Dick"*

Should I have called him Two-Too or Their-There? Two-Too was a better choice because Dick Pfeiffer is number won-won.

– Bob "Captain Fuzzy Photo" Gore



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# Gone But Not Forgotten

## **CMSgt Billy R. Hawkins, USAF (Retired)**

(Line Chief, 1976-78)

Deceased 12/12/04

Widow: Mrs. Sheila Hawkins

## **MSgt Harold L. England, USAF (Retired)**

(Crew Chief, 1967-70)

Deceased 4/13/05

Widow: Mrs. JoAnn England

3217 Race Track Road

Robersonville, NC 27871

## **CMSgt Andrew J. Webb, Jr., USAF (Retired)**

(Administration, 1956-57, 1965-67)

Deceased 3/22/05

Widow: Mrs. Carol Webb

## **Lt Col Paul E. Ross, USAF (Retired)**

(Maintenance Officer and Solo, 1955-56)

Deceased 3/27/05

Widow: Mrs. Jewell Ross

# Benchstock

## **Promotions:**

Good News from the Promotion Board: Both Dana Atkins (Left Wing, 1988-89) and Johnny Weida (Slot, 1989-90) have been nominated for promotion to Major General.

And our Board's own Chuck Ramey (Public Affairs, 1994-98) has been selected for promotion to Senior Master Sergeant.

## **Assignments:**

Colonel Brian T. Bishop (Commander/Leader, 1998-99) will become commander, 8th Fighter Wing, Kunsan Air Base, South Korea.

Maj Gen Dan Darnell (Commander/Leader, 1992-93) has been selected to head the Air Force's Legislative Liaison office.

## **Birth:**

Baby Girl: Allana Caroline Bowen

Born: 2/26/05, 2:40 p.m.

7 lb, 8.6 oz, 19 inches long

Parents: Bradford C. "Brad" and Laura Bowen Brad (Assistant Crew Chief #7/Maintenance/Support, 2000-04)

## **Credits**

The USAF Thunderbirds Alumni Association publishes *Thunder Rolls*.

## **Thunderbirds Alumni Association Board Members:**

### **Officers:**

Dan Cherry, Chairman, [dancherry@insightbb.com](mailto:dancherry@insightbb.com)

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[www.tbaa.org](http://www.tbaa.org)

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SMSgt T. Hall, First Sergeant, [treassia.hall@nellis.af.mil](mailto:treassia.hall@nellis.af.mil)

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### **Editor**

Ken Hoffman (1980-82)

### **History**

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Debby Baer-Becker (1981-83)

Jim Benson (1986-88)

Al Eakle (1989-91)

Rick Fuller (1985-88)

Dee Pfeiffer (1976-77)

Chuck Ramey (1994-98)

### **Graphic Design**

Kevin Gray, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company – Fort Worth, Texas

### **Printing**

Sprint Press – Fort Worth, Texas

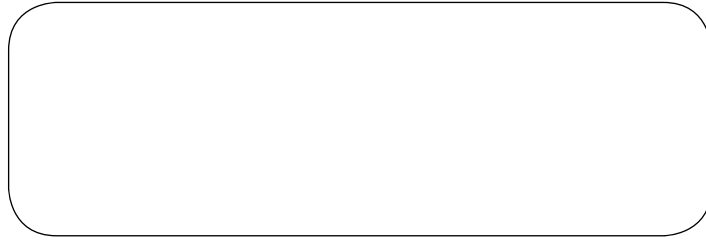
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# THUNDERBOLLS

THE USAF THUNDERBIRDS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

