

THUNDER ROLLS



Spring 2006
Volume 12

TBAA Creates Helping Hand Fund

Two days after Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast last year, the San Antonio paper printed a special photo section depicting the destruction. My eyes were riveted to one image in particular.

It was splashed across the metro-sized paper's center spread and was taken from a helicopter hovering above the 9th Ward just south of downtown New Orleans. Readers could see the area where a barge breached the levee along the Industrial Canal. Water lapped over the eaves of roofs, drenching everything below.

I immediately thought of Thunderbird alum Marc Cargo and his wife, Peggy, who live in Meraux, a small town a few miles east of the Superdome in St. Bernard Parish. Were they okay? Had they evacuated? And had floodwaters damaged their home?

My questions were answered a few days later when I received an e-mail from Marc saying he had evacuated. He was staying with his sister near Baton Rouge "along with 30 other friends and relatives and their assorted pets." They packed what they could in their camper and had parked it in his sister's driveway where they would stay until they could return home.

Banks and ATMs were closed, and the high school where Marc taught Air Force Junior ROTC was demolished. With the hurricane's widespread devastation, I figured other alumni had been affected as



Marc's T-38 model lies among the debris of what once was his living room.



This is what Marc Cargo found upon first returning to his home -- someone's SUV hanging off the corner of his house.

well. They probably were without homes, jobs, and had little, if any, access to cash.

That's when I e-mailed Bob Gore and asked if there was some way the alumni association could provide quick, financial assistance to those affected. He replied, "Yes, we can help our own."

Within two days, with a green light from the board, the TBAA Helping Hand Fund was in business. E-mails, dispatched through various alumni groups, asked for donations "all of which were fully tax deductible with every cent earmarked for those who needed a helping hand."

Checks began arriving along with offers of housing and employment from alums across the country. I was humbled by the response, but I shouldn't have been. It was typical of our Thunderbird spirit, proving once again, Once a Thunderbird, Always a Thunderbird.

Dick Pfeiffer provided a list of names and numbers for those alumni living in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama who might have been affected by Katrina – 13 in all. Within three weeks, with spotty phone service, I managed to contact all but one. Many had sustained roof damage or lost trees, which were covered by insurance, but a handful of alumni had experienced major damage. At one point, Marc described his house as being the "latest submarine in the Navy." The house was completely submerged, and about the only salvageable items were Peggy's heirloom china.

Chief Joe Barron, still on active duty at Keesler AFB, Miss., was left with only a suitcase of clothes and two uniforms. His home and everything in it were destroyed, along with his vehicle. He is living in his motor home, which had been stored out of harm's way. TSgt John Browder, who was TDY at Keesler with his family, lost all his household goods, car and clothes, and spent some time in a Biloxi shelter following the hurricane. TSgt Mike Sewell, who also was TDY at Keesler, lost his vehicle. Alum Chuck Johnson, who evacuated to his daughter's house in Dallas, suffered extensive damage to his home.



Nothing was left untouched in the Cargo's home. Today, they're living in a FEMA trailer and rebuilding. The debris has been cleared and the house consists only of wooden studs.

(Pictures courtesy of Marc Cargo)

All received assistance from the TBAA Helping Hand Fund, which is now a permanent fixture of our association. Additionally, the fund can be accessed by any alumni who left the team honorably and who need help meeting initial expenses following any type of natural disaster "earthquake, fire, lightning strike, flood, tornado or hurricane."

And although the hurricane season is over, it will be with us again soon. If last year is any indication, more alumni may be affected by natural disasters. Please continue to contribute whatever you can through the Heritage Thunderbird Foundation so we can respond even more quickly to future requests for help. Indicate on the check that your contribution is to be used for the TBAA Helping Hand Fund so it will be deposited to the correct account.

Additionally, be sure to keep your contact information up to date so we can call or e-mail you to see if you need help. Cell phone numbers are particularly useful because in most natural disasters, landlines will not be operating. Updates should be e-mailed to doewilson@aol.com or by calling 702-871-7245.

By Vickie Graham
Air Show Coordinator, 1976-78
Helping Hand Fund Manager

Thank You

Fellow Thunderbirds,

I'm writing this letter in sincere gratitude for the assistance I received from the Thunderbirds Alumni Association, namely the \$800.00 to pay off my former car. I can't begin to tell you how much your generosity has helped my wife and me. When we lost our car in hurricane Katrina, the insurance company, FEMA, the Red Cross and even the Air Force failed us; the Alumni Association and its elite members, however, came through for us in our time of need.

As a Technical Sergeant in the USAF, I earn a decent living, when budgeted properly, but circumstances arose that were beyond my control. Hurricane Katrina destroyed my car and I wasn't given a fair shake by a number of organizations that I have proudly supported over a number of years. I firmly believe that the numerous organizations around the country failed miserably during this natural disaster, but the Thunderbirds, as always, found a way to help.

I would like to thank all the members of the Thunderbirds Alumni Association for your caring and kind thoughts and also for being proactive in a reactive society. My plight is nowhere near as bad as others, but you assisted me nonetheless and I am in your debt.

I wish I could thank all the Alumni members personally, but I would like to thank two members for sure; General Dan Cherry and Chief Vickie Graham, for their wonderful presence of character and soothing words for me and my family. I've said it before and I'll say it now, being a Thunderbird was the best experience of my life; what I didn't fully comprehend was that once you're a Thunderbird, you're always a Thunderbird, and, once again, you have demonstrated your awesome power.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

Michael Q. Sewell, TSgt, USAF, Thunderbird Aviation Resource Manager, 1999 - 2002, Acting First Sergeant, 393d Bomb Squadron

'Tweren't Much Fun, But Then....

I felt like the Mark Twain character that had been tarred and feathered who said that if it weren't for the honor, he'd just as soon not have done it.

Our accountant, Art Ortiz, who has the fancy federal title of Enrolled Agent, told me in late 2003 that getting our final paperwork from the IRS approving the Heritage Thunderbird Foundation's 501(c)(3) status would be time-consuming and *somewhat* frustrating...but ultimately successful. He lied. It was not somewhat frustrating.

When we began the Foundation, I told you all that we were a 501(c)(3), and all that remained was permanent recognition by the IRS. Art had no worries, but I sure did. See, it wasn't his butt on the line with you guys. Steve Dwelle, whose family trust is our most ardent supporter, asked me if I was sure of our 501(c)(3) status. He had reason to be concerned. The way his family trust is set up, it can only give to charities, and if we failed to obtain our charitable status, it could threaten his trust. After each assurance to Steve, I'd flash an email to Art who would respond with affirmation.

After 18 months of dancing with the IRS, Doe handed me a letter from the IRS just a minute or two before I addressed the membership at our last reunion. The first word of this letter was... "Congratulations". Art was correct and I don't have to leave the country.

What have we done with the tax-deductible funds you have sent? We have organized our foundation with the finest legal and accounting professionals we could find. We take care of the Heritage Thunderbird—These Names are Mine! Sculpture and the precious list of names it holds. We have been the conduit for about \$6,450 of funds for the construction of the new Perch and have given members of our family affected by Katrina more than \$14,800. In the bank we hold \$5,900 in emergency funds for similar assistance in addition to \$14,107 in our general fund for expenditure as the TBAA requests. These numbers speak much more clearly than more words, so I'll stop.

--Bob Gore, Information Officer, 1974-76
Founding Trustee and Chairman,
Heritage Thunderbird Foundation

From the Chairman

We are at the beginning of another year of the Thunderbirds Alumni Association with new board members and an organization that is growing in numbers and is fiscally healthy and strong. For that we thank all those who tackled whatever deficiencies and shortcomings there were in the past to help get us where we are today. In particular, departing Chairman Dan Cherry and his board put the finishing touch on the progress being made even before their tenure.

Here's our board lineup: Jim Jannette, Vice Chairman, 1978-82; Debbie Lyons, Secretary, 1992-96; Dave Branks, Treasurer, 1977-80; Debby Baer Becker, 1981-83; Bob Beckel, 1966-67; Matt Byrd, 1993-94; Steve Chealander, 1982-84; Jim Curry 1955-57; Brock McMahon, 1974-82; Chuck Ramey, 1994-98.



Besides the continuing commitment for us all to support the active team in any way we can, the standard tasks for the board now are to continue the growth in our active membership so that each of us proudly wants to belong, put on a great and affordable biennial reunion and ensure the financial stability of the TBAA. Publishing the *Thunder Rolls* Newsletter in a timely and informative manner rounds out the major requirements of your TBAA Board of Directors.

This sounds great and should be relatively easy to achieve. Truth is, it can be if each alumni member participates in one form or another. We should all be conversant and somewhat proficient in recruiting. That was part of our mission as Thunderbirds. Now we ask that you help us recruit those alumni who have chosen not to be active members and convince them that we, the TBAA, are worth at least the \$30.00 annual dues, or \$300.00 for a lifetime membership. And it's not for the money; it is for the idea of continuing our belief that when an individual honorably leaves the team, "Once a Thunderbird, Always a Thunderbird" means just that. In addition, we do have a lot of fun getting together as members of certain year teams or collectively at the reunion. Our fiduciary responsibility, the newsletter and the reunion are more tied to the board of directors, and we will take care of all that.

There are other important projects on the table we need to endorse and support. The Heritage Thunderbird Foundation (HTBF) controls and maintains the official alumni scrolls and, as a 501(c)(3) organization, has the ability to collect tax-deductible contributions and disperse them to where they are needed. Plans are being made to develop and construct the stand-alone Thunderbird Heritage Museum, a first class facility at Nellis AFB. And there are many other ways and means where we can raise funds and support activities that warrant our consideration. The list goes on. Because we are all volunteers, we can never get too much help. Because all TBAA members are innovative and resourceful in a pinch, which is how and why the team has lasted 53 years, let's hear your thoughts. I remember what my squadron commander told me after I registered a complaint when I was a lieutenant. He said, "I don't need any more problems, bring me solutions." So...bring us solutions.



Chris Patterakis, Commander/Leader 1975-76, Chairman

The Road So Long Is Gone, But The Memory Lingers On ... And On ... And On

Gary Younglove (Admin., 1970-1972) completed his trip to visit all nine of the remaining Thunderbird F-4Es (*ThunderRolls*, Volume 10, Summer 2005) but the memory just won't quit. *RoadBike* Magazine, a national publication with an emphasis on metric motorcycles (<http://www.roadbikemag.com>), documented the trip in its Dec/Jan 2006 issue. Photos and the article's prominent position in the magazine provide a quick summary of Gary's 8,000-mile trip from Texas to Florida to California and back.

You can see *Roadbike* Magazine's beautifully written article "Finding Wings" on Gary's website at <http://www.gdyounglove.net/roadbike>. For details that go beyond the article, click on his site's History and Journals links and browse daily entries and albums related to the trip. For even more detail, Gary has written a book length version that includes additional inside information covering his tour on the Team. All of this is available for review on his extensive Web site.

Small Town Escapes Violence, Dale Sutter Does Not.

In what they hoped would be the first Thunderbird Reunion Ride motorcycle outing, Gary Younglove, Dale Sutter and Bob Gore rumbled out of Las Vegas with a Younglove crony, Mikey Two Plugs, and headed for a day in a small California town named Hell's Hole.

When quick-thinking residents heard the approaching bikers, they left town. All that remained was the local bar, the Hell's Hole Hole, and a large busy bartender named Shaniqua Lipinski. Lipinski, who has the word "Nutcracker Sweet" tattooed around her neck in Gothic Helvetica, took a fancy to Sutter's large Harley and tried to bite off his valve stems to prevent his escape. Younglove, Gore and Mikey Two Plugs made a clean getaway. The three reported that Sutter soon passed them. None had ever before seen a Harley leave a contrail and none was sure what caused the screaming sound as it passed.

When asked about leaving their buddy behind, Younglove pointed out that this was an Air Force reunion, not the Marine Corps. There is another motorcycle outing planned for the next reunion. While Gore talks about a tour of Sun City Summerlin or maybe a two-day trip to Zion, Yosemite or Death Valley, Sutter could not be reached for comment.

Thunderbirds Gather for Reunion

Once again Thunderbirds gathered from all points of the globe to reunion at the Las Vegas Hilton and at our hangar home. Why do we spend our travel time and dollars to make this biennial migration? We do it to reconnect and renew those bonds forged during our time in the red, white, and blue. We do it for that endorphin rush when we get a hug or pat on the back from one or several of our fellow alumni members. We do it for the same reasons that we visit family members because these relationships matter.

The F-4 Phantom Phamily beat everyone to the Phun when they met Wednesday night for a noisy celebration.

Reunion guests hit the ground running early Thursday to play in the Thunderbird Open or to catch a cool breeze on the very first Reunion Ride through the desert. Later, Lt Col Mike Chandler and his team kicked off the celebration with a “welcome home” party at the Thunderbird hangar. We enjoyed mingling with the 2005 Thunderbird team, fabulous food and drinks, and time spent revisiting our well cared for homestead. The Perch renovation is revolutionary. It’s a great place for Thunderbirds to gather, a place where our alumni support of the team is visible.

Friday’s air show was spectacular as Thunderbird F-16s painted the Las Vegas sky red, white, and blue. Nothing compares to the dignity of that beautiful six-ship delta formation, or the pride felt while watching “the boys” perform their march down. After, cheerful toasts echoed from both the Thunderbird Officers’ and Enlisted clubs.

Friday evening’s groups met on their own for dinner and more intimate get togethers. The T-38 and early F-16 eras met for a more raucous celebration.

Saturday’s well-attended meeting showcased Dan Cherry’s “State of the Association” briefing, while Lt Col Mike Chandler outlined his “State of the Team.” Colonel Waldo Givhan presented the proposed Thunderbird Heritage Center, a new, off-campus Thunderbird museum. A terrific 2006 board was elected to continue the tradition of excellence set by previous boards.

Saturday evening’s gala was a heart warming and proud experience. The “Lady Phantoms” Color Guard was in perfect step as they posted the colors and demonstrated the 13 folds of the flag. Their tribute to our “Gone, But Not Forgotten” teammates moved many to tears. Awards were presented, and the evening finished with a joyous and exuberant singing of the Air Force song.

After, many lingered in the local lounge to try to extend those bittersweet goodbyes. Eventually, the goodbyes were tempered with promises to meet again in 2007! Those are promises to keep.

Of course we wouldn’t have these memory-making moments without our sponsors. Our heart-felt thanks to Lockheed Martin, Pratt and Whitney, Alliance Air Service, Vanguard Industries West, The Coca-Cola Company, DeLuca Liquor and Wine, J. Lohr Winery, Allergy Relief Specialists, Protocall Communications, Las Vegas Floral Designers International, Chase-Durer Watch Company, Nevada Federal Credit Union and, our 2005 host hotel, the Las Vegas Hilton.

– Debby Baer-Becker, 1981-83



Five of a kind: Current and former Thunderbirds gather in photo formation (from left) Tim Roels, Gen “Fig” Newton, Maj Steve Horton, Bob Phillips, and Stan Musser.



Thunderbird Hangar Reception Hoodlums: (from left - back row first) Steve Chealander, Gary Martin, Dan Cooley, Jerry Thomas, Charlie Locklin, Jimmy Olschlager, Al Williams, Larry Milton, Tim Padmore



Boss Chandler takes a photo op with the Lady Phantoms Color Guard (from left) Bev Bedsaul, Elaine Burgess, Dee Pfeiffer, Boss Chandler, Shelley McIntyre, Marilyn Suhay, Sandy O’Konek, and Jackie Salter



Thunderbird commander/leaders sing out the old and sing in the new (from left) Lt Col Mike “Boss” Chandler, Lt Col Kevin “New Boss” Robbins, Brig Gen Dan “Chairman” Cherry, Chris “New Chairman and forever Boss” Patterakis



“Phantom Phamily” leads the party with the first mini-reunion event (from left) Larry Wing, Marty (Ramiro) Martinez, Jim Lenner, Don Eberlein, Doyle Fetzer, Pete Nino



Lt Col Mike “Boss” Chandler presents the 2005 Fitzgerald award to Cami Relfe



Fans now, Thunderbirds in the future! Amy Smith with son Eli and friend Ryan



“Best Little M.C. in Vegas” - Master of Ceremonies Matt Modleski rivals any John Stewart performance!



2006 Thunderbird Officers



Lt Col Kevin J. Robbins, 40, in his first season as the commander/leader, flies the No. 1 jet, leading all air demonstrations and commanding the 120-person squadron. Before his assignment to the team, he was the Director of Operations, 67th Fighter Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan. He is married to Kristine (Abbey) of Paso Robles, Calif.

Maj Jeremy Sloane, 36, in his second season as the Operations Officer, flies the No. 7 jet. As the squadron's second in command, he oversees operations, evaluates the demonstrations, administers flight evaluations and flies safety chase and orientation flights. He is married to the former Lisa Kinman, also of Federal Way. They have twin boys, Mitchell and Quinn.



Maj Scottie Zamzow, 34, in his third season, flies the No. 2 jet as left wing. Before his assignment to the team, Zamzow served as a T-38 flight commander, instructor pilot, and flight examiner with the 90th Flying Training Squadron, Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas. He is married to the former Landra Van Geem of Wichita Falls, Texas. They have a daughter, Laiken.

Capt Tad Clark, 33, in his first season, flies the No. 8 jet as the team's advance pilot and narrator. He flies media and orientation flights. The Seattle, Washington, native entered the Air Force in 1996 from the U.S. Air Force Academy. He is married to the former Capt. Jeannette Mismas of Cleveland, Ohio, and they have a son, Tad II.



Capt Nicole Malachowski, 31, in her first season, flies the No. 3 jet as the right wing in the diamond formation. Before her assignment to the team, she served as an F-15E Instructor Pilot and Flight Commander with the 494th Fighter Squadron, Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England. Malachowski calls Las Vegas home. She is married to Maj. Paul Malachowski of Buffalo, N.Y.

Maj Dan Mirski, 35, in his first season, is the team's flight surgeon. Mirski entered the Air Force in 1992. In 1996 he obtained a Medical Degree from Albany Medical College, N.Y. Most recently, Mirski was the Chief of the Emergency Department at MacDill AFB, Fla., as a Board Certified Emergency Medicine Physician. He calls Palo Alto, Calif., home.



Maj Steve Horton, 34, in his second season, flies the No. 4 jet as the slot pilot in the diamond formation. Before his assignment to the team, Horton was an F-16C instructor pilot and flight examiner for the F-16C Formal Training Unit, 56th Operations Group, Luke Air Force Base, Ariz. He is married to the former Heather Krohn of Colorado Springs, Colo. They have a son, Matt.

Capt Todd Randolph, 36, in his second season, is the team's executive officer. He supervises executive support, information management, budget, training, and personnel selection. He is married to the former Penny Thompson of Upper Marlboro, Md., and they have 3 children, Charles, Shawn, and Tavon.



Maj Brian Farrar, 36, in his second season, flies the No. 5 jet as the lead solo pilot. A native of Virginia Beach, Va., Farrar graduated from the Virginia Military Institute. He is married to the former Katie Lee also of Virginia Beach. They have two children, Lauren and Ethan.

Maj David Moreland, 34, in his third season, is the team's maintenance officer. He oversees nearly 90 aircraft maintainers and is responsible for keeping the squadron's fleet of 11 F-16s mission ready. Moreland calls Cleveland, Ohio, home. He is married to the former Michelle Gerbing of Seattle, Wash. They have a daughter, Ava, and a son, Luke.



Maj Ed Casey, 32, in his first season, flies the No. 6 jet as the opposing solo. Previously, Casey served as a flight commander and instructor pilot with F-16C Formal Training Unit, 63rd Fighter Squadron, Luke Air Force Base, Ariz. The Sparta, N.J., native is married to the former Alyson Brockob, also from Sparta. They have three daughters, Hannah-Kate, Madison, and Caroline.

Capt Angela Johnson, 31, in her second year, is the team's public affairs officer. Johnson oversees the Thunderbirds' publicity programs through her direction of specialists in public affairs, recruiting, photography, graphic arts and broadcasting. Previously she served as the chief of community relations for the Air Warfare Center at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.



Gone But Not Forgotten

TSgt Louis Earl Kirtley, Flight Engineer, 1959-61

Deceased 4/26/05

Widow: Mrs. Lena L. Kirtley

130 Ridgeview Drive

Nocona, TX 76255

H: 817-825-4104

John T. "Tim" Matthews, MSgt, USAF (Retired)

Crew Chief, NCOIC, 1979-81

Deceased 11-14-05

Widow: Elaine

5808 Emperor Way

Las Vegas, NV 89130

Brig Gen Anthony J. "Tony" Tolin

Honorary Thunderbird 1992

Deceased 2005

Benchstock

Promotion: John Posner (Right Wing, 1989-90) has been selected for promotion to Brig Gen.

Transition: MSgt Sue Rainone, Training Manager (1999-2003) retired from the Air Force after 20 years of active duty in January (effective 1 May 2006). She has accepted a civil service position working in the Center for Seabees and Facility Engineers at Naval Base Ventura County (Port Hueneme), Calif. She will be a course manager for the Navy Seabee tech schools. She will be wearing all her Thunderbird shirts to work with pride and doggin' the Blues whenever she can!

Get 'em While They Last : Silk Navy Blue Thunderbird Alumni ties on sale \$30.00 each. Contact Doe Wilson if you are interested.

Correction: The most recent *Thunder Rolls* article on "Thunderbirds in Wolves' Clothing" inadvertently did not include Lt Gen Charlie Hamm, who was a Wolf Pack Commander, and, like Buck Patillo, a left wingman (1964-65).

Thunderbirds Losses

Air Force Thunderbird SSgt Carlos Brad Coker, 29, died Dec. 8 in a house fire in a San Diego suburb. He served as a Team crew chief. He was from San Antonio, Texas.



He was on leave and in San Diego to undergo medical tests. Coker and a female companion were asleep in the home when a couch placed over a floor-heating vent ignited about 3:30 a.m. The woman broke through a front window to escape the flames while Coker stayed behind to search for a cat.

Sergeant Coker was an important member of the Thunderbird team and a great American who served his country with pride. He will not be forgotten.

2d Lt Taryn Ashley Robinson, daughter of Maj Gen Dave (Left Wing/Slot, 1987-88) and Colonel Lori Robinson and Lucy Lee and



King Fowler, was critically injured in an aircraft crash on September 21, 2005, south of San Antonio, Texas. At the time of the crash, Taryn was pursuing her dream of becoming a U.S. Air Force pilot as a student in the Introductory Flight Training program. She waged a fierce and tenacious battle against her devastating

injuries. She never gave up. All the while Taryn maintained concern for others and a style and grace beyond imagination. Her injuries finally overwhelmed her, and her parents held her in their arms as she passed away peacefully on January 10, 2006.

Thunder Rolls

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The USAF Thunderbirds Alumni Association publishes *Thunder Rolls*.

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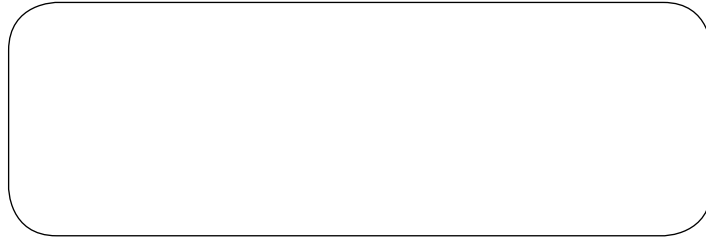
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THUNDERBIRDS

THE USAF THUNDERBIRDS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



“Right, Major ... You were *only* going 195 in a 200 knots speed zone ... rrrriightttt.”