

20th Fighter Wing Association

Newsletter



Welcome all ranks and AFSC's



The purpose of the Association

To preserve the military history and foster esprit de corps of past and present members of the 20th Fighter Wing and all previous and subsequent military iterations of that organization. Membership in the Association will be open to past and present members of the 20th Fighter Wing, their spouses and such other persons who have an interest in the affairs of the Association.

2022/2023 Board Members

Gino Passaro – President
Dave Roberts – Chaplain
Ron Obernier – Secretary
Bill Benn – Vice President
Art Sevigny – Historian
Jerry Fetter – Treasurer
Missi Zender-Sakach – 2023 Reunion Chairwoman
Steve Brown – 2025 Reunion Chairman
Robert Gregory – Past Reunion Chairman

By the Numbers

Total Members 251 Active Members - 209 (pay dues)
Associate Members - 12 (pay dues) Life Members - 30 (do not pay dues)

Aircraft Associated With:

A-10 - 1
F100 - 66
F100/F111 - 164
F16 - 9
F84 - 1
F86 - 1
T33 - 2
P38 - 1
P51 - 1

Miscellaneous Support 4

New Members Since Dec Newsletter

No new members this period

Fallen Heros

No notifications received this period.

Board Members Update

Secretary:

Regarding the Dayton Reunion. Take a look at our website (20FWA.org), then the Reunion Button. The first thing you see is a listing of members who have already registered for the 2023 Dayton Reunion. This list will be updated on a regular basis and your name will appear as soon as you register.

We have made a change on how to pay your dues via PayPal (PP). Just go to our website, then select the Membership Button. Follow the instruction on the 1st paragraph and when ready to pay select payment for one to five years. If you do not have a PP account, you can pay by credit card.

PP usage is the highest ever. This year to date, PP usage is at 49%, well above last year at 26% and lower previous years. Could be because of improvements on our Website that allow payments of \$20 to \$100 in increments of \$20. Of course, PP keeps more than its share ranging from 5.95% of \$20 to 3.98% of \$100 for the convenience.

An updated membership roster will be distributed soon so please check it over for accuracy and let me know if there are changes.

Treasurer:

Jerry Fetter our current Treasurer has served admirably for the past six years will be stepping down following the Reunion. Needless to say we are looking for a volunteer to fill this position. Please let Gino or Ron know if you are interested. This is a very important position and must be filled. If you have questions on Treasurer's duties, you can look at our By-Laws or drop Jerry an email.

Treasurer's Report from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022 3 Jan 2023

1 January to 31 December 2022

Bank Balance December 31, 2021: **\$24,838.08**



2022 Receipts:

Dues Collected:	5,600.67
History Books Sold:	104.08
2021 Reunion Refund (\$2000 Seed)	3,637.04
Donations	20.00
Total Receipts:	\$9,361.79

2022 Expenses:

State of FL Registration	70.00
Newsletter Expenses-Ron Obernier	145.00
20 th FW Awards and Plaques	1,099.26
2223 Reunion Banners	480.00
Webmaster Services-Deborah Lundgren	562.88
2023 Reunion Speaker Gift	62.04
History Book Postage-Sevigny	120.02
Dues Refunded	20.00
Bank Fee	6.00
Total Expenses:	\$2,565.20

Bank Balance 12-31-22: \$31,652.29

President:

This year we forwarded the criteria to the 20th Fighter Wing for our new award category "Base Support Enhancement Award". This award is targeted to outstanding DoD civilians and volunteers who have contributed greatly to the mission of the 20th and support of its personnel. Nominations are due to the Association by mid-June.

Letter From Maj Rivera on receiving the Associations' Aerial Achievement Award

Lt Col Fetter,

Sir I'm Bryan Rivera and I was the winner of the 20th Fighter Wing Association Aerial Achievement Award for 2022. Please forgive the late correspondence, I returned just before the holidays from deployment and was just recently notified of the award.

Thank you for the support and the check. I was looking for a way to leave a lasting gift to my squadron and this let me do so. We improved the squadron bar and I commissioned some fighter jet art to leave a lasting memento for the squadron.

It's really heartwarming to know the previous generations are still looking out for the ones that followed.

Respectfully,

Bryan "Fuego" Rivera
79th Fighter Squadron
Shaw AFB, SC

A Bit of History by Art

OPERATION READY

North Korean forces crossed the border into South Korea on 25 June 1950. Five days later, the first US ground forces arrived in South Korea and engaged North Korean forces on 5 July. The US was concerned that the Korean hostilities were a feint for a Soviet move on Western Europe. The Strategic Air Command (SAC) had been basing B-29/50s in the United Kingdom on a rotational basis but fighter protection was lagging. SAC was in the process of getting the 12th Fighter Escort Wing mission ready with the F-84E but was not mission ready yet. I've questioned why SAC had its own fighter units. The answer came when this question was asked of General LeMay at the National War College, 28 March 1950. His response was, "Because I know that if we are attacked tomorrow, the only fighters I will ever get are the ones I have. We will need them over our bases when we are loading bombs."

The 20th Fighter Bomber Wing (20 FBW) was stationed at Shaw AFB and was equipped with the F-84D Thunderjet which had replaced its F-84Bs in early 1949. On 8 July 1950 the 20th was in the process of preparing for a TDY to Camp Campbell, Kentucky, Andrews Field, Maryland and Turner Air Force Base, Georgia to take part in an air-ground demonstration. That evening a fragmentary warning order dropped which indicated that an increment of the 20th Fighter Bomber Group (20 FBG) would deploy to the United Kingdom to take part in rotational training programs. Two days later, orders directed the entire 20 FBG to deploy to RAF Manston with a departure date of 19 July 1950. This deployment was code-named Operation READY.

Operational control of the 20 FBG for the movement and while in the UK would fall under SAC. Col Cy Wilson was the SAC commander from the 27th Fighter Group overseeing this mission. (Col Wilson was commander of the 20th Fighter Group during the summer of 1944 until he was shot down by ground fire. Col Wilson was later killed in an F-84F crash. He opted to stay with the aircraft to preserve the engine for analysis as there had been several of these engine failures. Although he died, Col Wilson was able to save the engine and the problem was then identified.) Col John A. Dunning, commander of the 20th FBG would act as base commander of Manston in addition to the Tactical Group Commander. A year later, Col Dunning would take command of the 20 FBW.

On 17 July 1950, Operation READY was briefed at the old Shaw base theater which was located where the base running track is today. The deploying aircraft departed on 20 July in two groups consisting of 64 aircraft. One half of the aircraft staged through Otis AFB, Massachusetts and the other through Dow AFB, Maine, rejoining at Goose Bay, Labrador. From Goose Bay the formation made stops at Bluie West One (Narsarsuaq Air Base), Greenland; Keflavik, Iceland; and Kinloss, Scotland.

When the Group reached Dow AFB, they were informed that intelligence reports indicated the Soviets might try to interfere with the movement across the Atlantic. As a result of this



Operation READY briefing 17 Jul 1950. Col Cy Wilson, front row on the right. To his right is Col Dunning.

information, pilots were instructed to remove their personal baggage from the F-84s' ammunition compartments to allow live ammunition to be loaded. According to Group pilots I've talked with, the anti-exposure suits available at the time were ill fitting and of poor quality. As a result, none of the pilots donned these suits for the movement. This decision proved fatal for one pilot. Approximately halfway between Bluie West One (BW1) and Greenland, Lt. Hassell E. Sims, 55 FBS experienced an engine failure. After several attempts at an air start, Lt Sims executed a successful ejection entering the water within three miles of a Dutch weather ship. Rescuers reached Lt Sims within 20 minutes but, unfortunately, it was not fast enough. Cause of death was drowning most likely because of hypothermia. The rest of the movement was uneventful with the group arriving at RAF Manston on 26 July with four stragglers arriving the next day.

The first six weeks at Manston were limited to local orientation flights and ground training due to the lack of VHF radio crystals necessary for routine tactical flight operations in the UK. On 9 August the Group took on alert status with four aircraft on ground alert one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset. A minimum of twice daily practice scrambles was initiated. Endurance test flights were carried out using 230-gallon wing tip tanks to accurately gauge their fighter escort capabilities while operating at lower altitudes and speeds that would be suitable for jet fighter operations needed to escort slow B-29 bombers.

Towards the end of August, the Group carried out low altitude barrier patrols around the coast of East Anglia which provided protection for SAC bombers carrying out training exercises. The Group settled into a routine of training, exercise participation and public relations events for the remainder of their time in the UK. The deployment was originally intended to be for three months but was extended to five.

As a result of the loss of Lt Sims, additional training was provided for pilots in preparation for the return to Shaw AFB. The focus of this training included an RAF ejection seat simulator similar to the F-84's seat. Hands- on training with the anti-exposure suit was provided at a nearby pool to help the pilots become comfortable and confident in the use of this piece of equipment.



55 FBS Airmen working on his F-84D.



Mrs. Douglas, wife of the US Ambassador to UK, James, Hon.

The return to Shaw with 60 F-84Ds (four F-84Ds were lost during deployment) started on 4 December with a move to Prestwick, Scotland. The 20th cooled its heels at Prestwick, while waiting for the weather to clear. Traversing through the northern latitudes was challenged by limited daylight and the need to line up with suitable weather conditions. The Group was able to execute the second leg into Keflavik on 10 December.



20th pilots receive training with anti-exposure suits.

Again, poor weather delayed the 20th's westward movement until 13 December. It was this third leg of the return that almost cost the Group its entire complement of F-84Ds. As mentioned earlier, SAC had operational control over the 20th and provided weather support for each leg of the return trip. The jet stream was forecast to be 150 miles south of the planned route into Blue West One (BW1). Much to the surprise of the pilots, the jet stream was encountered after the point of no-return had been reached with winds reaching above 200 MPH. Reduced headway due to winds pushed back their arrival time and drained away fuel. By the time the Group arrived at Blue West Three the weather had closed in and was heavily overcast. The Group was forced to make an instrument letdown into BW1. This resulted in additional fuel consumption as the letdown added over 100 miles to the route. Aircraft landed with gauges showing zero fuel and some flaming out on the taxiway.

BW1 had one last challenge for the group. On the day they were scheduled to depart, crews awoke to their aircraft fully coved with a thick layer of ice and snow, Lt Cesar Martinez, 79 FBS described their aircraft as "Aluminum centered icecubes." BW1 lacked the deicing capability to clear all these aircraft but it was no problem for the creative 20th. According to the Group report, "This ice crust was removed by towing each iced up aircraft behind several jets which had been placed in a semi-circle and which had their engines running." The remainder of the return was uneventful with the majority of the Group arriving on the 18th and 19th of December. It seems the 20th received little if any recognition for their accomplishments with this operation. The 27th Fighter Escort Wing (SAC) received the Mackay Trophy for accomplishing "the first mass deployment of jet-powered fighters flying over the Atlantic Ocean from the United States to Europe." The 27th flew the same crossing route, two months after the 20th's crossing, on 15 October 1950. I guess SAC had a better PA office.

Incident At Stalag Luft I

By Royal Frey (55 FS, WWII)

There were four compounds on Stalag Luft I in the last 6 or 8 months of the war. South Compound, North 1, North 2 and North 3 Compounds. I was in barracks 11 of North 1 compound when the Germans decided to put all Jewish



Lt Col Cy Wilson

AAF fellows in one barracks and they decided on barracks 11 of North 1. So I moved to North 2 compound where Cy Wilson (C.O. of the 20th Group when shot down) was the ranking officer and compound C.O. As luck would have it, I was assigned to the barracks where Cy lived.

I was one of 20 men in one room, but Cy, being C.O., had his own little private room at the east end of the barracks.



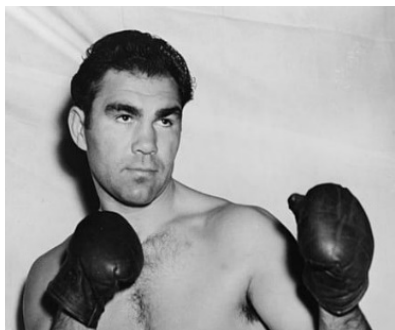
Lt Royal D. Frey

One dark gloomy day I looked out the window and saw this huge bulk of a man walking around our barracks. He had on a civilian hat and a beautiful calf length leather coat. He looked familiar but I could not place him, when all of a sudden one of my roommates said, "That's Max Schmeling," the German ex-heavyweight boxer, who had knocked out Joe Louis in 1937. When we noticed he rounded the end of the barracks to come in the door at the east end of the barracks we all ran out into the hall to see what he was going to do. Well, he walked up the step, opened the door and walked in. Cy Wilson's door was the first one on his left, a few feet inside the barracks door. Cy had also seen him.

Schmeling knocked on Cy's door and Cy opened it only to stare into this guy about belly-button level. Cy very slowly lifted his face to look up into the other fellow's face. He didn't say one word and then stepped back and slammed the door.

Schmeling slowly turned and went back out the door. Enemy or not, this guy was a VIP to us younger POWs and we raced down the hallway, out the door, and stopped him at the bottom of the steps.

We talked to him a little about him being a German paratrooper who jumped over Crete and had been wounded. Then Schmeling began passing out 8x10 glossy prints of him in boxing trunks in the typical boxing pose, mitts up and ready to defend. Everything was going fine until Schmeling suddenly said in a German/Brooklyn accent, "Cheez, youse guys is going to get home before I duz." That did it! When this "enemy" referred to the good old USA as "his" home, we all just turned around and walked away. All of us took our 8x10 glossies over to the latrine and lined them up in the urinal trough. For the next several days, those photos served as targets,



Max Schmeling

Current 20th Fighter Wing News

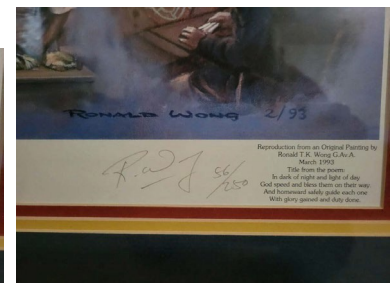
Some members have expressed a desire to learn what the 20th is currently doing . I have reached out to the Commanders Action Group and the Public Affairs Office to get information. They all point to the 20th website (www.shaw.af.mil) and their Facebook page (Shaw Air Force Base). I have also reached out to the 20th FW historian and she did respond that she would assist when she gets her feet on the ground. She is new to the position.

Silent Auction During the Dayton Reunion

Mrs. Donnie Hazlett has graciously donated a signed/numbered Ronald Wong print entitled "With Glory Gained and Duty Done" to be used as a fund raiser in honor of her husband Ron Hazlett who passed away last March. Ron, pictured below with his F-111 was in the 79TFS from Jan 87 to Jan 90.



This is a special print as it is also counter- signed by Col Terry Schwalier and triple mated with the Wing's colors in a museum quality frame.



Print will be on display at the Reunion with associated bid material. There is a reserve placed on bidding. If you are not able to attend but wish to bid please send your bid to passarog@verizon.net. You will have to reimburse the Association for any packaging and shipping costs. Bidding closes at noon on 2 Sept. Top bid, if reserve met, will be announced at the general membership meeting that same day.

2023 Dayton Reunion Update

Holiday Inn Dayton Fairborn, Ohio

31st of August thru the 2nd of September 2023



The 20th FWA bi-annual reunion will be held Thursday, August 31st to Saturday, September 2nd in Dayton, Ohio. A March updated reunion information and registration flyer can be found at <https://20fwa.org/> under the tab marked Reunion or can also be [viewed and printed HERE](#); just click on the link. The reunion kicks off with registration, informal buffet and hospitality/history socializing on Thursday. Friday's highlights include visiting the National Museum of the United States Air Force during the day and squadron camaraderie at Carillon Brewing Company in the evening. Saturday provides "best ball" golfing at Twin Base Golf Course, organized by Merrill Clark, or free time to explore Beavercreek, Yellow Springs and the surrounding Dayton area. Saturday evening culminates in a formal dinner in the Center Stage area of the NMUSAF, amidst the planes of the Korean and Southeast Asia War Galleries. Maj. Gen. Gregory A. Feest, USAF (ret) will be our keynote speaker. Hotel reservations for the Holiday Inn Dayton Fairborn, an IHG Hotel can be made at the registration link [20th Fighter Wing Association](#) or by calling 1-937-426-7800. If you have any questions, please contact Reunion Chairperson, Dr. Missi Zender-Sakach (Daughter of Robert/Bob Zender, 79FS), missiz@summitesc.org.

Merrill Clark has just finalized the golfing event. Below is current information for your advanced planning.

Our golf outing on 2 September will be at the Wright Patterson AFB **Twin Base Golf Club course**. We have four tee times beginning at 0800. which will allow us to accommodate 16 golfers. The fee for 18 holes of golf and cart will be \$39 per golfer.

The course is one of two courses on Wright-Patterson and we have the Prairie Trace West Course as a back-up.

The head pro is Andrew Mitak and as of 15 February, the tee times have been confirmed. If any golfer needs to rent clubs the cost is \$20 for 18 holes. Range balls will be available at the \$3, \$5 and \$7 level.

Twin Base Golf Club is located at 365 Communications Blvd, Wright-Patterson AFB. Phone # (937) 257-4130

Prairie Trace West Course is located at 4690 Skeel Avenue, Wright-Patterson AFB, Phone # (937) 257-7961

Golfers who intend to play on the 2nd, please contact Merrill Clark at (830) 481-7195 via telephone, text or email: mgcfl11@gmail.com and provide your current handicap, if applicable. If you do not have a handicap, please provide what score you would normally shoot for 18 holes. I will need this information so that I can assemble foursomes which will be evenly matched.

The format for our golf outing will be a best ball scenario where each golfer in a foursome will hit a tee shot and then the foursome will decide which ball will be played next. Once each golfer in the foursome has hit his/her second shot, all from their best ball position, the foursome will again decide which ball they will play for their third shot. This is the scenario for all 18 holes to include choosing the best ball location once golfers have hit to or onto the green.

2025 Tucson Reunion

(No change from last newsletter)

Desert Diamond Hotel and Casino
October 30, 2025 – November 02, 2025



Room rates are \$124 plus taxes per night
(breakfast not included)

- Complimentary airport shuttle.
- Complimentary internet.
- Room pricing is good for 3 days before and 3 days after.

Suggested events for Thursday and Friday might include one day at the Pima Air and Space Museum and the Davis Monthan Boneyard. Tucson also has the Titan Missile Museum and that might be an alternative venue on Saturday for those who do not play golf. We are still working on a speaker for the banquet. The dinner on Thursday will probably be a barbeque-type dinner with each squadron making their own arrangements

From Our Members

Submitted by Joe Peterburis

(Presidents note) Joe is one of the Association's most senior members and a great contributor to our newsletter. He is in an elite club of World War II Aviators. He submitted his latest photo sporting his leather jacket with WW II 55TFS patch for the newsletter. All the best to you this year, Joe!



Submitted by Bart “Bartman” Barton, 77th Commander, 90 -92

The Gambler Champagne Brunch

As the 20th Fighter Wing and associated squadrons transition from various aircraft types and even move to new home stations, it is the individual squadron traditions that help link the Unit's past history with the present-serving, active duty airmen. It is important to ensure that these traditions are passed down to the new flag bearers and just as important that the individual units are encouraged to keep the various traditions active.

One such tradition that goes back to the 77th Fighter Squadron's F-84 days is the Annual Gambler Champagne Brunch. In 1957, the Squadron was stationed at RAF Wethersfield and had started to transition to the F-100. As legend has it, this was also about the time of the first Champagne Brunch. The event was continually held year after year on or about the first Saturday of the New Year. Legend also has it that this tradition continued even when the Squadron was deployed for winter WTD to Wheelus Air Base. With the move to RAF Upper Heyford and transition to the F-111, the tradition of the Brunch was not lost and was maintained by the Squadron until its flag was moved to Shaw AFB in 1993. The Squadron, now flying the F-16, has continued the tradition of the Brunch.

While there are many traditions inside the Brunch, probably the longest lasting is the “signing of the tablecloths.” New Gamblers attending their first Brunch are invited to sign their names to one of many (at least seven or more) white tablecloths. In red ink of course! Their signatures are hand embroidered over the next year for a lasting record of squadron members. In red thread of course! These tablecloths are maintained at the current active squadron for display at next year's Brunch and the cycle continues.

Other traditions have been added or maintained over the years. The attending Gamblers, past or present, wear appropriate attire. Red of course! Gamblers scheduled to depart the Squadron during the coming year generously provide an ample supply of bubbly for the festive occasion. Appropriate toasts, traditional and otherwise, are offered including a water toast to all Gamblers that “have gone before us.” Some glass is broken and war stories and lies are exchanged.

Bottomline is this tradition is a great time to renew the esprit de corps of the Squadron and have new Squadron members understand and appreciate the rich heritage of the 77th.

Additionally, I hope this short article spurs a lasting conversation on traditions of the 20th Fighter Wing. I know the “Hard to be Humble” crowd has a few including the requirement by joining and departing Squadron members to consume eggs of various size and color. Also, if there are any RAF Wethersfield folks that can add to this recount then let's keep it going.