

20th Fighter Wing Association Newsletter



20 March 2026



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.

2025/2026 Board Members

Gino Passaro – President:

Steve Homoki – Vice

President

Dave Roberts – Chaplain:

Ron Obernier – Secretary

Art Sevigny – Historian

Missi Zender-Sakach -

Treasurer

Steve Brown –2025 Reunion

Missi Zender-Sakach – Past Reunion Chair

?????????? – 2027 Reunion Chair HELP!!!!!!

Your Association needs your urgent attention! Unless we have volunteers to take over the following positions in 2028 the Association will have to disband. Positions are President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Chaplain. If you have questions, please contact one of the Association Board Members.

20th FWA TREASURER'S REPORT
OCT 1, 2025 – JANUARY 31, 2026

As of January 31, 2025, the current balance is \$39,011.99. With the large membership turnout at Tucson's reunion, Steve Brown was able to reimburse the organization for the reunion seed money (\$2000) and share \$4,341.33 in profits. Checks have been issued for the awards given to individuals at Shaw AFB. The Executive Board has chosen to donate future funding to Shaw in support of one or more of the base's social/charitable events and further enhance Gino Passaro's ongoing efforts to increase membership. Bill Hoge will help facilitate the contract(s) in the spring for these donations.

We continue to receive income from new/renewed memberships. Membership checks are sent to Ron Obernier, recorded, and then they are forwarded via mail again to Missi Zender-Sakach to deposit. Missi maintains the PayPal account. After verifying PayPal membership income with our banking statement at the end of each month, Missi sends the Secretary and President a copy of the PayPal report for members that have renewed in this manner. Please feel free to email Missi at her NEW email address of ZenSakScience@outlook.com at any time if you have questions regarding payments or deposits. All check deposits are made for The Twentieth Tactical Fighter Wing Association business account at Citizens Bank with Treasurer, Missi Zender-Sakach and Gino Passaro, President, as co-signers for the organization.

Respectfully Submitted,
Missi Zender-Sakach

New Members Since Last Newsletter

A warm welcome to our new members:

Tom and Nancy ODaniel. Tom served the 20TFW at RAF Upper Heyford. He was in the 20th OMS, BHS, FMS, AMU from 1974-85.

Tim and Mary Rardin. Tim served the 20TFW at RAF Upper Heyford. He was in the 42 AMU from 1985-91.

David and Kathy Martin. David served the 20TFW at RAF Upper Heyford. He was in the 20th CES from 1970-74.

Hopefully, the Association can continue to attract former members to join. Please contact your 20th friends and encourage them to join our worthwhile organization!

Fallen Heros



This Listing contains only those warriors identified to the Association since the last newsletter.

Lt.Colonel (Ret) Robert Caldwell

Lt Colonel (Ret) Robert Caldwell served the United States Air Force in many capacities during his distinguished career and the 20th TFW at RAF Upper Heyford, England during the years 1972-76. Robert was a true aviation pioneer and assigned to the 55th/20th Wing. He flew the F-111.

Colonel (Ret) Kenneth Alley

Colonel (Ret) Kenneth Alley served the United States Air Force in many capacities during his distinguished career and the 20th TFW at RAF Upper Heyford, England during the years 1974-77 and at Shaw AFB from 1996-97. He flew the F-111 and was a long-time member of the 20th Fighter Wing Association.

Sallie Sue Frogge

Sallie Sue Frogge was the dear wife of long-time association member Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) James H. Frogge (Dec) and will be remembered as a vibrant member of the F-100 community at RAF Wethersfield (1966-68). She persevered as an Air Force wife, moving all over the world, including Texas, England, Germany, and New Mexico.

Colonel (Ret) Arley "Gator" McRae

Colonel (Ret) Arley "Gator" McRae served the United States Air Force in many capacities during his distinguished 30-year career and the 20th TFW at RAF Wethersfield, England during the years 1961-64. He was assigned to the 77th TFS and flew the F-100.

A bit of History

by Art Sevigny

20th Nails Five Me262s 10 April 1945

The 20th was tasked with escorting 1st Division B-17s attacking an aircraft assembly plant and ordinance depot at Oranienburg, Germany. Shortly after the target was hit a formation of 10-15 Me262s dove through the formation. The 20th engaged and was able to destroy five and damaged three. In all, 8th AF fighters destroyed ten Me262s this day with the 20th claiming half of them. This attack resulted in the largest loss of bombers to the 262. The entire attack consisted of about fifty 262s claiming ten bombers.

Following this mission "The Fighting AAF" visited the 20th at King's Cliffe to create a dramatic recreation of the 20th's part in the mission. This was recorded on a wire recorder. Before there was Memorex this was state of the art. The audio was recorded onto a thin wire on a reel-to-reel setup. Leo Kerns, 77FS and later President of the 20th Fighter Group Association, was able to get the wire recording transferred onto tape and years later I digitized the audio and incorporated it into a video linked with some gun footage from the mission. Below is the transcript of that recording.

AAF Announcer: Stand by as the fighting AF takes you by wire recorder to the air over Germany.



Lt Pogue on wing. Reporter interviewing some of ground crew using the "Wire Recorder."

Cpt. John K. Brown 55FS: Hello Monty, this is Brownie here. Big Friends at two o'clock level. Over.

Col Robert P. Montgomery 20FG/CC: Roger, Jake. I've got them spotted. Take your flight over and check the markings on the tail. I'll switch to C-Channel and give them a call. Over.

Brown: Okay, I'll check them. Out.

Montgomery: Hello big friends. Little friends here. Are you happy? Over.

Unknown B-17 leader: Roger little friends.

On time and on course. Out.

Montgomery: Hello Waxwood Leader, this is Monty. Brownie, put your outfit on that first combat group. Keep your red section high and in close. Look out for these jet jobs and don't leave your big friends. Over.

Brown: Roger Colonel. Waxwood Leader to you. Out.

Capt. Leo Kerns 77FS: Roger, Kerns here. Hey, Brownie, I guess it'll be a milk run. It doesn't look like any business today.

Brown: No, look at six o'clock high. There's two Jerrys now.

Kerns: I see 'em. Looks like jet jobs, and here they come. They're coming your way, Jake.

Brown: Okay, drop them tanks, boys. Let's head 'em off. I'll get that one that broke right. You take the one that broke left. Looks like he's out for that straggling bomber.

Kerns: I got 'em cut off, but he's heading for the deck now.

Brown: What are you waiting for? Go get him.

Kerns: Chief said to stay on the big friends.

Brown: Well, I didn't hear him. I can't miss this. I'm right on his tail.

Machine gun sounds.

Brown: I think I got a [unintelligible] into him did you see him Red Two?

Lt David Rackley 55FS: Going down in smoke, see him? He should hit smack right in the middle of that lake.

Brown: Roger, I see him. There he goes. Let's get back up to the big friends.

Kerns: Nice work, Brownie.

Brown: How's the chief making out?

Kerns: I don't know, but I'll give him a call.

Brown: Okay.

Kerns: Ah, hello Chief, Kerns here. Brownie got himself a jet. Anything cooking down there, over?

Montgomery: Monty here I haven't seen a thing yet. We're south of Big B [Berlin?]. Nothing but a bunch of pretty lakes around here.

Lt Edward Pogue, 79FS: Hello Chief. Pogue here. I found a field over here. It's about three o'clock to you. It's loaded with planes. There's no flak. I'm going in. Over.

Montgomery: Go to it, Pogie. We're riding cover for you. Hey Jurgens, you're next. I'll follow.

Lt Frederick Jurgens 79FS: Roger Chief. I'm going in. Looks like there's plenty for everybody.

Machine gun sounds.

Montgomery: Hey, who's that HP doing slow rolls over the field?

Jurgens: Jergens here. That wasn't no Hot Pilot, Chief. That was flak that flipped me on my back. Better stay out of the north corner of that field.

Montgomery: Too late, I just caught a load of it myself. You okay?

Jurgens: Roger Chief. Still seems to fly all right. What about you, over?

Montgomery: I caught a few, but I'm all right. Are you okay to make another pass, or do you want to go out now?

Jurgens: I still got some ammunition left. Let's take another crack at it.

Montgomery: Okay, let's do it again.

Machine gun sounds.

Montgomery: Look at 'em burn. They sure go nice. Okay, gang, let's go home.

Kerns: Hey, Chief Kerns here. I'm down on the deck, just west of you, over by the column of smoke. I just strafed the field.

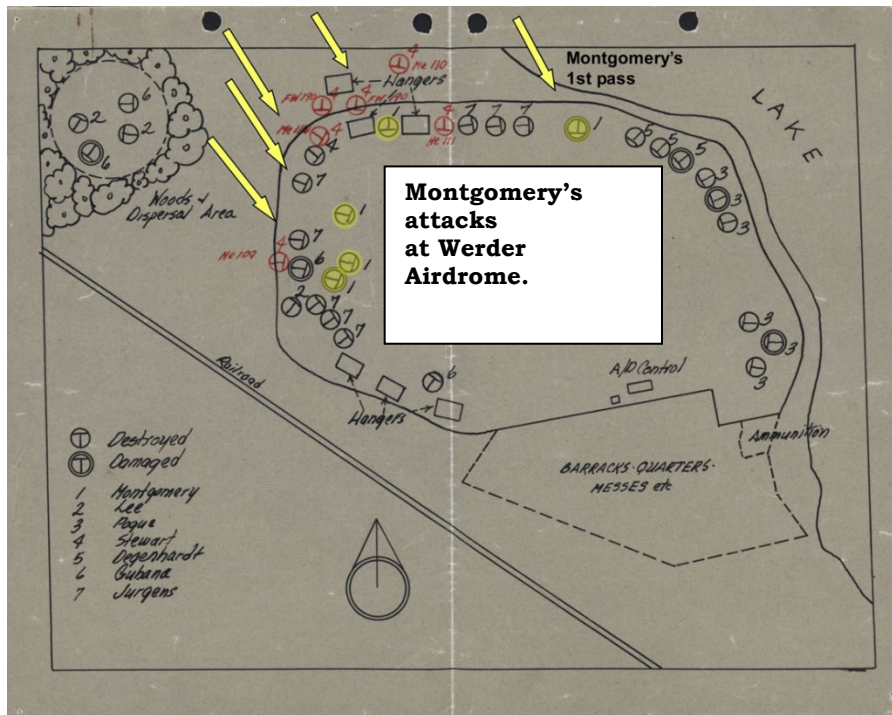
Montgomery: Monty here. I told you to stick with the big friends. Over.

Kerns: I know Chief, but this is no time to argue. I'm out of ammo and eleven 190s on my tail. Can I lead them your way? Over.

Montgomery: Hell no, we're out of ammo too. Get rid of him somehow. We'll wait for you at Hanover.

Kerns: [sad voice] Okay Chief, I'll let them go. Out.

AAF Reporter: This is your reporter again. The combat photos showed the group had destroyed 51 enemy planes, five in the air, and 46 of them on the ground. Oh yes, Lieutenant Kerns did let the eleven 190s go. He out maneuvered them and returned safely to the base. The Colonel and Flight Officer Jurgen had their P-51s pretty badly shot up, but neither of them had a scratch on themselves. This is your AAF combat reporter returning you to the United States. [NOTE: strafing engaged seven separate airfields]



20th Fighter Wing News

Your Association will sponson two events at the 20th Fighter Wing in 2026. The first is the annual Spring Kick off Classic Golf tournament on 11 April and the Freedom Bash on the 4th of July.

In February Award checks were presented to the award winners. Each one designated where the funds should go. One to the 55 FS Snack Bar Fund, one to 77 FS Snack Bar Fund, and one to National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Please pray for our men and women who are currently engaged in combat.

From Our Members



Submitted by Larry Carter: Larry is with the Montgomery AL AFA chapter, and they are honoring the Eagles of ACSC's annual Gathering of Eagles with a luncheon. This year one of their Eagles is Joe Peterburs. In 1944-45 at age 20, he flew P-51s for the 55th at Kings Cliff in WWII.

Larry flew in the 77th, 55th, and commanded the 79th during eight years and two tours at RAF Upper Heyford. In 1993 he attended the 79th stand down and one of the activities was a visit to Kings Cliff. The local Pub had a memorial to the men of the 20th who flew there in WWII.

Colonel Joseph Anthony Peterburs, United States Air Force, retired, stands as one of the most remarkable combat aviators and leaders of the 20th century—a man whose service spanned World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Cold War. Born in Saint Paul, Minnesota, in 1924, he entered active

duty at just 18 years old and quickly distinguished himself as a fighter pilot. Flying P-51 Mustangs with the famed 20th Fighter Group and 55th Fighter Squadron in England, he completed 49 combat missions, destroyed five enemy aircraft on the ground, and shot down a German Me-262 jet—the world’s first operational jet fighter. The Me-262 pilot was Walter Schuck, a German ace with 206 victories. Joe’s final mission of the war ended when ground fire crippled his aircraft, forcing him to bail out at low altitude. Captured, imprisoned, and later escaping near Berlin, he joined a Russian tank unit and fought alongside them until Germany’s surrender.

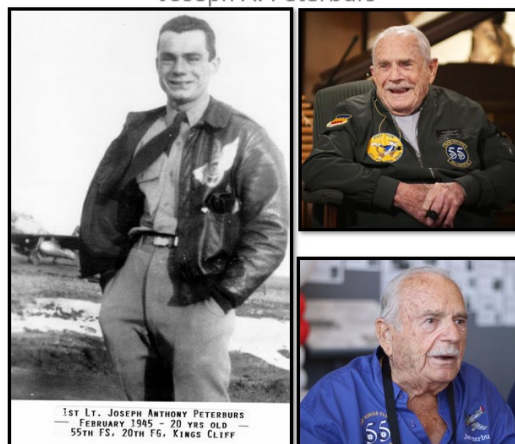
After the war, Peterburs continued to lead with distinction, commanding an African American unit during the early years of desegregation and ensuring a smooth, disciplined transition during a pivotal moment in military history. In 1951, he returned to combat in Korea, flying F-51D missions over North Korea. Despite sustaining facial and shoulder wounds from enemy fire, he completed 76 missions and served as a flight leader and operations officer, earning a reputation for courage, resilience, and tactical skill.

His career expanded across the full spectrum of air operations. He flew multiple fighter and trainer aircraft, survived an emergency ejection from a burning T-33, and participated in atomic weapons testing at Camp Desert Rock. As a senior officer, he held key command and staff positions across NORAD, the Royal Air Force Fighter Command, and Seventh Air Force in Vietnam—where he survived a rocket strike during the Tet Offensive that destroyed the quarters where he was sleeping.

From Germany to Colorado Springs, he shaped the development and integration of advanced tactical air control systems across NATO, commanding major units and modernizing air command-and-control capabilities during the height of the Cold War.

A command pilot with more than 4,000 flying hours and 125 combat missions, Colonel Peterburs retired in 1979 after 36 years of extraordinary service—leaving a life and unwavering devotion to duty.

Joseph A. Peterburs



Submitted by Ron Obeiner:

Recently I was digging around in a box of old paperwork. You know the stuff I'm talking about. It's the stuff you went through a long time ago. You know - it's that box labeled "I've got to save this stuff." Well, while digging through the stuff I discovered the following old, crumpled, worn, yellow page that was titled "Remember Me." It kind of got my attention and my eyes began to water the more I read. I'm sharing this with YOU.

REMEMBER ME

Some people call me Old Glory; others call me the Star-Spangled Banner.

But whatever they call me, I'm your Flag, the flag of the U.S of A. Something has been bothering me, so I thought I might talk it over with you.



Because it's about you and me.

I remember some time ago people lined up on both sides of the street to watch the parade, and naturally I was leading the way, proudly waving in the breeze.

Then your daddy saw me coming, he immediately removed his hat and placed it against his chest So that his hand was directly over his heart
Remember?

I remember you, standing there straight as a soldier.
You didn't have a hat, but you were giving the right salute Remember?
Remember little sister? Not to be outdone, she was saluting the same as you with her Right hand over her heart Remember?

What happened?

I'm still the same old flag, I have a few more stars since you were a boy, and a lot more blood has been shed since those parades of long ago.

I don't feel as proud as I used to.

When I come down the street they stand with their hands in their pockets.

I may get a glance and then they look away.

The children are running around and shouting. They don't seem to know who I am.

I saw one man take his hat off, then look around, He didn't see anyone else with theirs off, so he quickly put his back on.

Well, it won't be long until I'll be coming down your street again.

So, when you see me, stand straight, continue to set a good example, And I'll salute you by waving back.

THEN I'LL KNOW THAT "YOU"

"REMEMBER"

(Author unknown)

Submitted by Ron Obernier

Remembering the 20th Fighter Wing, all other Units, Personnel, Family, and Friends having an attachment to RAF Wethersfield through the years



Wethersfield Airfield Museum celebrates its tenth year, though a meet and greet for American visitors was in place in 2015, the museum was officially opened in June 2016 at the airfield. With the base being transferred to the Home Office and becoming an immigration camp in 2022 the museum went into storage. In 2024 it re-opened in the village of Finchingfield in a room many will remember as the hairdressers overlooking the pond, just over the bridge from the NCO Hotel.

In 2025 the first full year in Finchingfield, the museum hosted 683 visitors, 72 from the USA, a mix of WW2 416th BG family members, 20th TFW and 819th Red Horse veteran's. Six external events were attended with the new event tent and display. 4 evening visits were made by RAF Air Cadets and Air Scouts. £4.500 was raised from donations and sales of merchandise. £2000 from a previous Parish Council grant was used to meet the £6.500 annual running costs. A special grant from the Home Office

and Braintree District Council of £6.500 (with a “not for running cost” caveat, only for community benefit) was used to install a chair lift, electrical and fire safety inspections, and work. It was also used to purchase the new external event tent and displays.



Derrel Dudley and Roger Robbins reviewing some history at the museum

Home Office security will not allow this. The museum team intend to fund a memorial to RAF Wethersfield’s WW2 and Cold War Heritage, remembering the fallen and all those who served, that project will start at the end of this year.

The museum team are busy changing displays and 2026 will feature Graham Duffy’s Building dioramas. Curator Ross Stewart has published a free 114 page PDF Book Fatal Crashes of RAF Wethersfield (with input by Art Seigny). Twenty crashes from 1953 to 1963 being Twentieth FBW/TFW.

The museum will be open every weekend from April to October in 2026, 10am to 4pm last entry at 3pm. We will open privately for USA visitors by prior arrangement if their schedule does not fit. Contact wethersfield.museum@gmail.com

In our ten years we have hosted over three hundred American visitors. Continuing into the 2027 season is not certain, although funding will always be an issue, staffing and lack of future generations to carry the torch will be the overriding hurdles we face. It will also become clearer as we enter 2027 if the Immigration Camp on the base will continue, when decisions on the future of the museum can be made. Moving to Finchingfield was always a temporary solution, the target is to have the museum back on the airfield where it belongs. Finally, anyone that intends to visit should be aware there is no opportunity to visit the airfield as the



2027 20th FWA Reunion

New Orleans, LA

Oct – Nov 2027

In the absence of a reunion chairman volunteer the President has contacted two tourist agencies in the New Orleans, LA area. A Request for Proposal was submitted to these agencies and in turn they will contact several convention center type hotels in their area to get response. These responses will be submitted to your Association Board for a decision on the one that best suits our needs.

We need help to pull this event off. If you would like to help, please contact a Board Member. Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

