

# Red Eagles

## Christmas Newsletter



December 25, 2010  
Issue 8

### Fellow Red Eagles: Commanders Call

*This quarters article was written by Mike Scott, Colonel, USAF (Retired) he was the eighth and last commander, 4477th TEF/TES.*



Happy Holidays, Red Eagles. It's my turn in the *Commander's Call* bucket and I hope I can carry it off as well as my predecessors. Lord knows, they did a much better job in ensuring the continuation of the Squadron!! To wit, as I write this, it is 23 years after I had the privilege of beginning my short tenure as Red Eagle Commander - a four month period that culminated with the last flights on 5 March '88 and squadron closure shortly thereafter.

"Why close the Red Eagles?" was the question of the day during that turbulent period. Although there were many issues that made the decision difficult and complicated, the answer simply boiled down to, "affordability". Previous *Commander's Call* articles pretty much sum up the dramatic growth and change of our organization. But, maybe a short recap of our, basically, 10 year squadron evolution



might help to understand why the Red Eagles were viewed as expendable.

Realistically, the Red Eagles consisted of two items: a unit and a mission. The unit consisted of people and stuff. The mission made us a training aid for the Tactical Air Forces (TAF) - USAF, Navy and Marines - of the United States.

Let's address the unit, first. The earlier articles described our transformation from a barebones - few people, not much stuff, no luxuries - outfit into a full-up, 'MEI-able' organization that paralleled the white world Air Force. The 'can do' early days, although rough around the edges, provided TAF leaders with a basic confidence that the fundamental core of the *Constant Peg* concept - US pilots operating MiG aircraft providing the TAF with exposure to potential enemy aircraft before they encountered them in combat - was doable. But, leadership was worried about our ability to sustain that early mode of operation. The aircraft were old and, despite the best efforts of the best maintainers in the USAF, their reliability rate generated safety concerns and caused sortie cancellations that sometimes resulted in fruitless TAF deployments to Nellis. Costly reverse engineering efforts, and the siphoning of resources and talented people to support the program are other examples of issues that contributed to our challenge.

In order to survive, we needed to mature. In order to mature, growth in the form of added/new aircraft, facilities, support stuff, supply chains, and people was required. In order to grow, funds were required. In order to get the funds, confidence that we could become safer and more efficient was required. And, in or-



#### Editor's Christmas Column:

These are my guidelines for Christmas:

- Peace on earth starts with your family. Put aside hard feeling and disagreements on this one special day.
- Spend this day with family and friends and let them know how much they mean to you. Say "I love you" to those special people in your life. Make that phone call on Christmas day.
- Treat each gift you receive as if it cost the giver a fortune. It doesn't matter so much about the gift as the thought behind it.
- Think of your past Christmases and try to make this one the best. This is a time for giving, not just gifts but of yourself.
- You can submit your stories or roster updates by emailing them to: [bgalloway5@elpasotel.net](mailto:bgalloway5@elpasotel.net) or [bobbro@bresnan.net](mailto:bobbro@bresnan.net) or mail to:  
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der to gain/sustain the confidence, leadership mandated we move toward USAF's tried and true, traditional way of doing things. In sum - if we were to survive, change was required and MONEY was required to effect and support it.

Fortunately, money was available. The basing of the Stealth fighter at Tonopah; the overall defense oriented Reagan years; and leadership's enlightened attitude towards realistic training (a result of our Viet Nam experience) made the 80's a perfect environment for support of a program like ours. We adapted to the required change, the money was made available and our unit grew - really grew! People; new buildings and hangers; additional, *new* aircraft; an integrated supply/parts chain; additional support vehicles, etc -- we got it all! And acquiring "it all" cost money. However, it was also expensive to sustain it all! This eventually became problematic.

Now, let's move to the mission. Throughout its' short life, *Constant Peg's* core mission - exposure to MiG aircraft - remained constant (no pun intended!). However, as the rest of the program matured, so did the exposure concept. Originally, the program simply matched a MiG with a US fighter and various maneuvers were accomplished that provided the US pilot with the knowledge of how his aircraft performed vis-à-vis the MiG. However, as the unit grew and matured, the 'exposures' gradually evolved to include multiple MiGs vs. multiple US fighters as well as inclusion in Red Flag exercises as the opposing force. (Side note - our last mission on 5 March 1988 was a Red Flag in which we launched 17 separate MiGs - all within the same flying period!) From day one, after their participation, TAF aircrews filled out program evaluation/critique paperwork. Invariably, their comments reflected a "Best Program Ever" theme. Bottom-line - the money for growth was money well spent.

So, back to the question of the day, "Why close the Red Eagles?" We changed, we validated our existence, we provided a professional, valuable product - **we accomplished our mission** - what else was needed from us? Answer, "Nothing". We did our job. However (thankfully), so did a number of other programs, national agencies and policies. As a result, victory in the Cold War belonged to our Nation and our Allies. And, as is typical when a war is won, Congress' largess towards Defense diminished. USAF was forced to 'cut' costs. Leadership's challenge became, "How do we reduce overall force structure and maintain both an adequate operational force and a training force?" Along with other programs such as the Aggressors, we'd done our job extremely well and contributed mightily to the matured air-to-air combat abilities of the fighter communities - to the point that USAF leaders felt that the fighter community could adequately sustain their proficiencies using assets from various TAF operational communities. Furthermore, our potential adversaries were supplanting our MiG types with newer, fourth generation MiGs. So, while we remained valuable as a dissimilar Aggressor/Adversary asset, our value as an "exposure" or something we would meet in the real world as an adversary was quickly diminishing. Our program required significant funds to operate and, finally, from a safety standpoint, our program contin-

ued to be viewed as high risk. By combining all the factors, the end result became obvious - the cost versus requirement comparisons concluded that the value gained by retaining training assets such as the Red Eagles (and the Aggressors) was less "affordable" than that gained by retaining operational, war fighting assets of comparable cost.

Wow - four months as Commander and all I can come up with is 1100-plus words to explain a rather simple concept of affordability! No wonder my legacy is 'closure'! Actually, the period was quite dynamic and reflected the true Red Eagle personality. After the initial shock of the announcement, Red Eagle professionalism was never more apparent. Personnel reassignments, equipment accommodation, facility turnover, and all the other myriad of issues associated with closing our one-of-a-kind organization were attacked with the zeal that was the hallmark of the Red Eagles. And, throughout, we continued providing our product right up to that last, memorable day when the Red Eagle MiGs gave Red Flag its' 'best opposing force ever'!!

I had the good fortune to be a part of the Red Eagles for most of our existence: squadron pilot from '79-'83; a TAC Headquarters *Constant Peg* manager for most of the next three years; and, after a year as a 'real world' F-15C guy, Red Eagle Ops Officer and, then, Commander. From each vantage point, it was obvious that, as great as the mission was, and as nice as the stuff became, the people were better! **"I am a Red Eagle"** can only be said by a select few - thanks for allowing me to say it as proudly as I know you do!!

*Mike Scott retired as a Colonel, USAF, in 1996. He is currently a Southwest Airlines pilot. He resides in Henderson, NV, with his wife of 42 years, Bonnie. They have a married son, Kelley, a High School administrator in Minnesota and a married daughter, Mollie, a homemaker in Henderson. Mike and Bonnie's kids have presented them with five grandchildren, one of whom passed away unexpectedly in Summer 2008. And they are expecting a sixth on 1 Feb .*



Front from left - Kelley and Nichole Scott, Carson Scott, Mollie and John Stewart. Back - Kylie Scott, Bonnie, Mick Stewart, Maggie Stewart (the butterfly on Mike's right shoulder), Mike and TJ Scott .



## Bob "Darth" Drabant Awarded Air Force Analyst Lifetime Achievement Award for 2010



RED EAGLES, it is my privilege to announce that one of our own, Bob "Darth" Drabant, was recently honored with the award of the Air Force analyst **Lifetime Achievement Award for 2010.**

The award recognizes Darth for more than 42 years of unique accomplishments while leading critical analysis for the multiple combat aircraft, foreign military sales, and Joint munitions programs to which he was assigned. The results of

Darth's work have helped with critical investment decisions about major weapons systems.

In her letter informing Darth of this honor, the Director of AF Studies and Analyses in the Pentagon, Dr Jacqueline Henningsen, stressed that Darth's "unparalleled efforts developing test methodology and analysis significantly enhanced the combat capability of 15 weapon systems across the Combat Air Force and Joint environment."

I can tell you first hand that Darth has done one helluva job for the Air Force.

When I first met Bob Drabant I was an F-4E instructor at the Fighter Weapons School and he was an analyst from Eglin. Darth had just finished developing the charts explaining John Boyd's concept of energy maneuverability. These charts allowed fighter pilots to understand comparative performance between two dissimilar fighters engaged in dog-fight engagements.

Armed with the information that Darth was able to provide, fighter pilots for the first time were able to understand the "why" when one fighter gained an advantage over another. Before Darth published the charts, pilots had understood what happened, but not why, or when to expect a given result. This was priceless information and Darth brought it to the table.

Bob Drabant was involved in many other test developments and analyses, including the F-15 IOT&E. But, none was more noteworthy than the exploitation of the MiG-23 during HAVE PAD. Darth was specifically hired by HAVE PAD pilots and RED EAGLES Ron Iverson (USAF Bandit 2) and Tom Morgenfeld (USN Bandit 7) to conduct the analysis of data for this important flight test and performance study.

When HAVE PAD was completed Darth remained with the RED EAGLES during my watch and beyond. He was very important to subsequent analyses as well as numerous unrelated tasks. One such task was helping Maj Gerry Huff

(Bandit 6) get the airfield construction completed at the TTR so that the pilot's could borrow and fly the MiGs that belonged to our maintenance guys.

After the RED EAGLES, Darth's accomplishments continued with important contributions to the F-117 program and later, other classified projects.

The value of Bob Drabant to the Air Force is clearly illustrated by his current position at Nellis AFB as the Technical Director of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Test and Evaluation Group. The Group is responsible for executing the Sustainment Operational test on the A-10C, F-15C, F-15E, F-16C, F-22A, B-1B, B-2A, B-52H, MQ-1 Predator, MQ-9 Reaper, RQ-4 Global Hawk, U-2S, HH-60G, HC-130 and the Guardian Angel para-rescue jumpers. The TEG also does the Tactics Development and Evaluations (TD&Es) for all of these Mission Designation Series (MDSs). The TEG has 8 test squadrons: 31 TES, Edwards AFB, CA, which supports AFOTEC Det 5 tests on the F-22A, B-1B, B-2A, B-52H, MQ-1, MQ-9, RQ-4, Airborne Laser testbed and soon the F-35A and our biggest squadron; 49 TES, Barksdale AFB, LA for B-52H tests; 72 TES, Whiteman AFB, MO for B-2A tests; 85 TES at Eglin AFB for F-15C, F-15E and F-16C tests; 88 TES (CSAR CTF) at Nellis AFB, NV for HH-60G and Guardian Angel tests and their OL-C at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ for HC-130 tests; the 337 TES at Dyess AFB, TX for B-1B tests; the 422 TES at Nellis AFB, NV for A-10C, F-15C, F-15E, F-16C and F-22A tests and soon the F-35A; 556 TES at Creech AFB (Indian Springs Auxillary Airfield), NV for MQ-1 and MQ-9 tests; 53 TEG Det 2 at Beale AFB, CA for U-2S and RQ-4 tests; and 53 TEG Det 3 (4477<sup>th</sup> follow-on) for special tests. Oh yes, and the TEG has a one person OL-A at the Air National Guard/Air Force Reserve Command test Center (AATC) at the Tucson International airport sharing the 162 FW F-16 National Guard Base. The TEG has over 800 people spread out over these 8 geographically separated locations. As you can see, Darth is not very busy.

Way to go Darth. You make me proud.

Gail Peck

## Seasons Greetings

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year Red Eagles! This is certainly one of my favorite times of the year to be sure. It's been a good year and I'm looking forward to next year with great hopes.

This year we plan to do a non-traditional Christmas dinner here at the Galloway's. We do enough turkey and ham as we did for Thanksgiving. This time I left all the planning to Melody, Sabrina and Aaron. They decided on the menu and I just nodded in approval. So, that being said, it looks like surf and turf or "T" bones with crab, lobster and shrimp. Which is just fine with me. I'll let Aaron grill the steaks, I'll take care of the lobster and the girls will do the rest. I plan to stay out of the way as much as possible to cut down on any confusion. The rest of the day will be spent exchanging gifts, enjoying good company and sitting on the sofa like



a beached whale.

This has been a difficult Christmas to select gifts for my wife, Melody. I always ask "what would you like for Christmas" hoping to get some useful ideas on gifts for her. And, in return, I promised to give her a list of things I would like. I really thought I could do that. However, that was not the case. My "Sweet Thing" lets me buy what I want or need all year long so when Christmas rolls around, I'm stumped to come up with something for her to get for me. Turn-about is fair play where she is concerned. So, she was stumped as well when I asked what she wanted. I used my imagination and successfully found several gifts I think she'll like. As for me, I told her a Nissan 370Z (only \$46,000) might be a nice gift idea. I was promptly informed it would not fit in my stocking and to come up with another idea. Well, you can't blame me for trying.

Christmas for me is really all about my family and the grandkids. Raina is five years old now, smart as a whip and a ray of sunshine. Zander is about 15 months old and walking all over the place, starting to talk and getting into stuff. Go figure. Part of my family I'm just as proud of is the Red Eagles. I get many emails from you guys keeping me up to speed on what is going on, roster corrections, as well as sharing thoughts and stories with me. It means more to me than I can express. Thank you for being there and allowing me to be part of your family. Merry Christmas Red Eagles.

*Ben Galloway*



## Red Eagles Reunion For 2011

It looks like the reunion will be on Oct 21, 22, 23, 2011 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Earl (Obi Wan) Henderson is still working on the hotel and other details, but he feels confident all of that will all fall into place. Everyone should mark their calendars and schedule their vacation/holiday time to attend. This should give you enough advance notice to start looking at airline ticket prices as well. As things start to come together, I will keep you all posted on any developments.

For those of you living in the Las Vegas area and that would like to help with the planning of the reunion, please contact:

Earl (Obi Wan) Henderson at the email listed below.

[obiwanlv@aol.com](mailto:obiwanlv@aol.com)

## In Memoriam

In the last several months we have lost two members of our Red Eagles family. Our thoughts are with them, their families and loved ones. They are:

**Hope Murphy**, wife of Richie Murphy, 21 October 2010. Hope and I were on the opposite ends of the political spectrum but we shared many emails. I will miss her Tánaistí.

**Don "Devil" Muller**, Colonel, USAF Ret., 16 November, 2010. A well respected friend to many and a great fighter pilot. His awards and decorations included two Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Purple Hearts, Eleven Air Medals, an Aerial Achievement Medal, and the Legion of Merit. Don's interment is to take place at Arlington sometime this Spring.

## Red Eagles Web Sites of Interest

Here are some web sites that you may find of interest. Just click on the link to take you to that site.

Red Eagles Facebook page. This site is maintained by Bob Breault and myself. We currently have 31 members. Please feel free to request to join the group:

<http://www.fbjs.facebook.com/group.php?gid=75655098950&ref=nf>

Military.com, this is listed as the 4477th Test Squadron. We currently have 32 members listed.

<http://unitpages.military.com/unitpages/unit.do?id=600794>