

Red Eagles End of the 3rd Quarter Newsletter, 2011



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Issue 11

Fellow Red Eagles: GCI Bandit Control II

This article was written by Bud "Chops" Horan, Colonel, USAF, Retired. He was the second GCI controller assigned to the Red Eagles, 1979-1980. After the Red Eagles he was assigned to the UK as an RAF Exchange Officer, followed by assignments to TAC Headquarters, USCENTCOM, and NATO AWACS. Chops was also a Squadron Commander and Sector DO at the Western Air Defense Sector. His last assignment was as a Division Chief at the Pentagon where he retired from active duty in 1999.



It all began here 38 years ago when the Weapons Controller Basic Training course taught by the 3625th TCTS was the entry-level, 60-day, course of instruction for GCI. The 325th now teaches a 180-day course in a state-of-the-art training facility for Air Battle Manag-

ers who will ply their skills on AWACS, Joint STARS, and Air Control Squadrons.

Life couldn't get much better, or so it seemed, for a GCI guy in the Aggressors. The few of us "dregs" around at the time in the 64th and 65th – Shadow, Worm, Truck, – were in constant demand controlling missions from either the Range Control building at Nellis or on the road supporting the DACT/EACT phase of the program with other TAC units. This was what you wanted to do if you were a young captain who loved air-to-air but couldn't fly. Controlling multi-bogey missions was a real challenge no matter which squadron was on your line-up card. During this era, the Aggressor controllers were somewhat "orphaned" from the AF mainstream. We wore flight suits when other GCI guys didn't (except for AWACS crews, which none of us wanted to be at the time), and we walked and talked like fighter pilots when our peers said we shouldn't. GCI controllers didn't have billets to attend the FWIC until well after my time, but we were developing or teaching fighter-weapons tactics to adversary crews at every opportunity. Local sorties against the 414th (F-4 Fighter Weapons School) and 422nd (Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron) were rare, but it pitted the best against the best. Radios and radar were so intermittent from An-



9-11, Ten Years Later.
Never Forget!

Editor's Column:

Fall is upon us and time to prepare for Winter.

- It's time to start putting things in order for winter. Fertilize the lawn, put the storm windows up and drain and put away the garden hose.
- Get the car ready by checking the temperature rating of your anti-freeze, put the snow tires on and if your battery is over 5 years old, you might want to think about replacing it.
- Check your winter clothing. If it smells like your last trip to "Red Lobster", dry cleaning or washing is in order.
- You can submit your stories or roster updates by emailing them to: bgalloway5@elpasotel.net or bobbro@bresnan.net or mail to:
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gels Peak you often didn't know how you did until you got to the de-brief. You could tell how your day went on scope by how many beers your flight lead bought you at the bar. After a year or so, the real good ones like Jet and Moose developed a sixth sense on how to beat the other guy. In short, it was all a blast – to include countless experiences and anecdotes that you'll never see in print. Just when I thought the job couldn't be any better, the call came from those strange guys working out of the white trailers on the flight line. They wanted to hire another GCI guy.

Early in '79, Gerry "Huffer" Huff came into the 65th and asked if I'd be interested in coming to the 4477th TEF. Like the other MIG drivers, he was one of the attached guys we didn't see too often. I never really knew anything about the unit, but I had worked with some of the guys that were attached to the Aggressors at the time, Pappy Frick, Ron "Moscow" Iverson, Jose Oberle, et al, were in a special category nobody could talk about. Huffer knew I'd been talking with Jim "Bluto" Keys (see his May Newsletter article) about possibilities with the 4477th, and he wanted to know if I was ready to throw my hat in the ring. Couple of funny things about recruiting at

the time, especially for the GCI guys. First, even if you thought you knew what these attached guys did for a living you knew you couldn't talk about it. Second, the 57th Wing was likely at the lowest point ever in Aggressors controller manning. There were only four or five of us at Nellis on any given day, so I thought no matter whom they picked; the manning couldn't support an out-of-hide transfer. But, what did I know? The mission with the priority got their say, and I jumped at it.

When I interviewed with Joe Oberle and a few others, a plan was unfolding where a tactical radar would be fielded somewhere in the Range Complex that covered TTR, either in R-4807 or R-4809. The "assets" had not yet arrived, but it looked like Bluto and I would have our hands full when they did come over from AF Systems Command – a move that was imminent. So, my thinking was along the lines of working "close-control" missions at its best. But, first we needed to get the airfield and facility ready. These details are better covered in Gail's forthcoming book, but I'll never forget the first few weeks as I checked in. When I arrived at the unit, we were still the 4477th TEF. Many of the original cast were leaving or had left, and a new cadre of pilots was forming under Gail Peck that in-



Pictured from left to right: LCDR (USN) Charles "Heater" Heatley, Bandit 8; Capt Bud "Chops" Horan, GCI; Capt Karl "Harpo" Whittenberg, Bandit 11; Major Gerry "Huffer" Huff, Bandit 6; Capt Dave "Marshall" McCloud, Bandit 10; LCDR (USN) Tom "Squid" Morgenfeld, Bandit 7; and Major Don "Devil" Muller, Bandit 3. The picture was taken at TTR in front of a US Navy QF-86 visitor in the early summer of 1979 during the period of tactical deception.

cluded Dave "Marshall" McCloud, Hugh Brown, Chuck "Heater" Heatley, Karl "Harpo" Whittenberg, and others. Most of these guys I knew from the Aggressors, but this was a whole new ball game. I was getting in on something special and wanted to make the most of the time with these great Americans. I'd been an Aggressor for two years, but I had never even seen a MIG.

It took several trips to Tonopah to figure out who was who, what my job would be – "what radar?" – and how best to contribute. Skipper made me the Security Officer when Don "Devil" Muller (Lord rest his soul) proved his forte was in flying ops and not desk work. It was through this job I learned the most of what went into making this unit independent and strong. The guys in maintenance made it easy for me to find my way around. Billy "Indian" Lightfoot tossed me the keys to one of the vintage WW II jeeps he salvaged so I could tool around the Sandia facilities and set up personnel security arrangements. Gary Lewellen helped me with security procedures on the gate, badging, overhead satellite periods, and countless other mundane tasks. Each trip up in the Cessna brought a new set of faces and challenges. As opening day got closer, we spent less time at Nellis and more in helping out doing odd jobs at the site. Security was a self-help project as we were largely "out of site/out of mind" from the experts at Nellis, Langley, and the Air Staff. I had a notional POC to work with, but each contact brought new checklists and TAC instructions that either didn't apply to us or could jeopardize our secrecy. Skipper made some tough calls in these early days to make sure we could execute the mission safely and securely. When confronted with an unexpected issue we all attacked the problem and found the best solution. This doesn't mean we cut corners. In fact, we went the extra mile to get things right and make sure we were safe and secure. One example is when Headquarters levied the responsibility on the unit that before we flew from TTR as a TAC asset, all military and civilians had to be in-briefed to Constant Peg. There were over a hundred civilians who commuted to/from TTR each day. They all had clearances, but they weren't readily accessible. At

Jose's suggestion, I contacted the Security chief at Sandia and worked with the local FBI to set up briefings with range personnel. As it turned out, getting consent and signatures on affidavits from countless civilians was the easy part. They were all great Americans who understood they were part of something special and were about to eye-witness to some spectacular flying ops. When I reported back to my Air Staff POC on a secure line that we had our in-brief/de-brief processes in place and gave him a run-down on the magnitude of the procedures, he shouted back: "You're telling them we fly *what?*!" I never called back.

By mid-July '79 we were ready. The first wave of MIGs in tight formation appeared in the overhead as I stood there in civvies with my jaw open and holding a Polaroid camera I'd brought from home. Walking up next to me was none other than our Wing Commander who flew up that day to witness the historical event. Before I had a chance to introduce myself, he asked what the hell I was doing taking pictures. The only thing I could think of was to tell him I was the security officer and these pictures were needed to document the transfer of the assets. He didn't buy it, but he was caught up in the moment and I started snapping away. I got two near-perfect shots of the MIGs just before the break. After showing them around for a day or two they landed in the back of the safe. I regret to this day losing track of those photos. Too bad, as they would have been a great keepsake for all us Red Eagles (P.S. Let me know if any of you ever saw them again)

It didn't take long for the unit to build and maintain a workable ops tempo. Selected aircrew deployed to Nellis for Red Flag would have an "off" day on their schedule and have their dreams fulfilled with an up-close look at either the MiG-17 or MiG-21. Bluto and I would alternate between Nellis Range Control Facility, "Blackjack," and TTR so we had at least one of us on scope to flight follow the BFM sorties. From an air-to-air perspective, our job as GCI controllers was mainly to facilitate the rendezvous and make sure the airspace was sanitized. For the year I was there, we didn't evolve beyond 1-vs-1 and we didn't work outside R-4809. According to Steve Davies' book, more robust tactical missions were still a few years off. Good thing, because 4809 was at the extreme edge of radar and radio coverage from Angel's Peak and comm links were poor. We could work the TAC aircrew all the way into the range from Nellis, but when they descended to maneuver with the MIG that would "intercept" them in

the TTR, contact was often lost. It was while working one of these missions later that year when we lost Hugh Brown. Everything was normal until I heard a "knock it off" from the other aircraft and Hugh's MIG just wasn't there anymore. It was a terribly sad day to lose such a great man.

The chase aircraft was a T-38 that would depart Nellis and arrive overhead in time to meet up with the first sortie. As often as I could swing it, I'd use the back seat of the T-38 as my mode of transportation instead of the Cessna on those days I needed to be up-range. What a thrill! After the first mission landed, the IP would often let me take the stick for a few minutes before we had to RTB and go about our other chores. I'll never forget how Marshall covered for me the day I inadvertently boomed the TPH complex as the Sandia folks were not pleased.

Each of the TAC and Navy aircrew that flew these sorties against our MIGs had to be in-briefed. So, it was either me or one of the Red Eagles beaming off to give the good news that was Constant Peg: "Sign this paper and you will get to fly against a MIG." I remember getting lost in the role in front of the entire Holloman F-15 Wing during a mass in-brief. Harpo flew me down in a T-38. This time, I waited until the very end of the security briefing before I told them what Constant Peg was all about and told them what they would be flying against when they got their chance. I couldn't resist it, knowing they knew but they couldn't say. The silence in the auditorium was deafening. You could see the sweat on their brows and the YGBSM look on some of the young faces. For a dreg, it didn't get much better than that. I had the humbling experience of making the same rounds with TAC aircrews from George, Miramar, Langley, and other fighter units. I'll never forget the astonished reaction from some and the "know-it-all" reaction from others. TAC was on the rise in those days, and flying with the Red Eagles in the late '70's was an airman's dream.

In early '80 AFPC called with a great opportunity to serve as an Exchange Officer in the Royal Air Force. Obi was the new Squadron boss, and he helped me get my assignment code lifted. I left the Red Eagles after only a year on station with mixed feelings knowing there was so much more that would be to accomplished as the squadron grew. In

truth, GCI wouldn't be needed for a few more years and it made sense for me to move on and re-join mother AF. I look forward to upcoming articles from Dan "Truck" Futryk, Dennis "Jaws" Waldrop, Jim "Smack" MacDonald, and the other Bandit controllers that will provide important details on all the fun I missed.

Years later, I would run into a former Red Eagle on occasion when Constant Peg was still classified: Scotty at Aviano, Devil at Ramstein, or Marshall and Jack Manclark at the Pentagon. All we could do was share that special look when you knew you were part of something very special. To this day, I am blessed to know I had a small part as a member of the most premier and professional flying outfit that ever wore an AF patch.

Bud "Chops" Horan

Move to create a formal RED EAGLES Alumni Association

Fellow RED EAGLES,

As a part of the Oct 2011 RED EAGLE Reunion opportunity, a committee was formed to create a formal RED EAGLE Alumni Association.

The first step in this process has been to develop a proposed charter to serve as the organizational basis for the RED EAGLES Alumni Association.

I (Gail Peck) chaired a Charter development committee consisting of Ben and Melody Galloway, Bob Breault and Bob Drabant. Additionally, John "Admiral" Nelson coordinated the proposed Charter through a Las Vegas legal firm on a pro bono (no fees charges) basis. The legal firm will, upon adoption of the Charter by the RED EAGLES, file the necessary paper work to establish the Alumni Association as a non-profit organization to be operated in accordance with the laws of the State of Nevada.

Please read over the proposed Charter that was emailed to you on September 28th and if you have any major heartburn or suggestions, email those issues to me at: gaillard.peck.ctr@nellis.af.mil

Please consider the total package. Our committee will consider all comments and if deemed appropriate will provide alternate language in the Charter.

We agonized long and hard over the membership dues and finally settled on \$20 per year to hopefully keep the organization solvent. I hope that is an acceptable number.

There will be a RED EAGLE business meeting mid afternoon on 29 Oct 2011 at the Boulder Station. Exact location and timing will be forthcoming.

It is the goal of the 29 Oct meeting to present the Charter

for a vote of those RED EAGLES present. Assuming the group will approve the Charter, the next step will be for those members present to select 6 Board members from a slate prepared by a nominating committee. Obi Henderson, as the interim Board President, chaired the nominating committee and appointed Peck and Nelson to assist in developing a slate of RED EAGLES for the membership to consider as the permanent Board.

As soon as the Charter is approved and the Board is elected, the interim board will be dissolved and the leadership will be turned over to the new Board to organize itself and operate in accordance with the guidance in the Charter.

So, please take a few minutes and review the proposed Charter document emailed to you and by all means be sure to attend the business meeting during the reunion.

Thanks. I am looking forward to seeing old friends and making new ones.

Gail Peck

Bandit 9



The Red Eagles Reunion Sticker

This the reunion sticker designed to commemorate the October reunion. Included are the silhouettes of the three different types of aircraft we flew. There are two red stars for the two pilots we lost in that type of aircraft. Hats off to the crew in Las Vegas who designed the reunion stickers and had them printed. Well done!

Reunion Reminder

As a last minute reminder, please send your payment for the events you wish to attend if you have not already done so.

John (Admiral) Nelson will be taking care of the funds for the banquet and the golf course gathering. The cost for these events are as follows:

Friday, Oct 28, activities should hopefully unfold as follows. Around 1500 Hrs, a reception (drinking!) at Red Eagle bar in 65th Aggressor Squadron.

Friday, Oct 28, 1700 Hrs, a gathering of Red Eagles at the Nellis Golf Course Club House for heavy finger food, free beer and wine. Mixed drinks are available, pay as you go at the bar. The cost for that event - \$15.00 per person.

Saturday, Oct 29, Golf at 0900 Hrs at Black Mountain Golf course, approximately \$40.00 per person (pay at the club house). 1600 Hrs Business meeting at Boulder Station to discuss formalization of a Red Eagle Alumni Organization. 1800-2230 Hrs, evening banquet at the Boulder Station Hotel and Casino- \$40.00 per person

Please send your check or money order, times the number of people for events you wish to attend to: (Example: Golf Course Club House event for two \$30, Boulder Station dinner for two \$80, Total \$110).

Make checks payable to John Nelson and send to:

John Nelson
4016 Spring Crest Lane
Las Vegas, NV 89129

In Memoriam

Test pilot Dave Ferguson passes away

Former Red Hats commander and stealth test pilot David Lynn Ferguson passed away on August 10 after a long battle with cancer. With 20 years in the Air Force and 20 years at the Lockheed Skunk Works, he is best known for test flying the YF-117A and YF-22A stealth fighter prototypes.