

# Red Eagles End of the 1st Quarter, Spring Newsletter, 2013

March 31, 2013  
Issue 16

## Fellow Red Eagles:

*This quarter's article is written by Harry Kepler, SMSgt, USAF, Retired. Harry was a Aircraft Fuel Systems technician and his AF AFSC was 2A6X4.*

Karma, kismet, chi, fate, call it whatever you like but I believe. The year was 1976, I joined the Air Force right after high school and for my first 9 years I tried everything I could to get stationed back at home. Home for me was Las Vegas NV, see I was a GI brat my Father was still in the AF and at that time himself stationed at Nellis AFB. I was fortunate enough to be able to go TDY to Nellis AFB and did get to visit with my father at his shop; it was one of my AF career highlights. Yet I still wanted to be stationed there, to be close to my family and friends, but it seemed like a pipe dream. I was stationed at Castle AFB for 3 years to start with, and then a 3 year tour at Ramstien AB Germany and then right back to Castle, all the while my dream sheet had Nellis as my first choice. After 3 more years at Castle I had pretty much given up hope of ever being stationed at Nellis and then I received orders, to a unit listed simply as 44477 TES, Nellis AFB, I of course was ecstatic. Of course in no time the euphoria turned to thoughts of having to learn another airplane another system, I had started out working F-106 Delta Darts, then moved on to F-4 Phantoms, and was at the time working B-52 BUFs and KC-135 Tankers, so having to learn another system was not something I was exactly looking forward to.

I was fortunate in my life and my career to be taught to do the very best I could do at every task I did and to do it like I was sign-



ing my name to it, to become the very best at what I did and to make myself invaluable. However having to learn a new aircraft system would mean starting near the bottom again and that was something I was not looking forward to doing.

I once guaranteed a SMSgt that a fuel cell I replaced would not leak and he said to me "you can't do that", I asked him do what? He said, "guarantee it", I said well I always guarantee my work and this was no different, it didn't leak.



So off I went to talk to my boss and anyone else that could possibly tell me what kind of aircraft I would be working on, in no time at all I realized from the comments I was getting that no one knew anything about this unit, in fact no one had ever heard of it. Now this was the age before everyone had a computer sitting on their desk and getting info on you next base and squadron was mostly word of mouth. I did have a few people say to me it was some top secret stuff



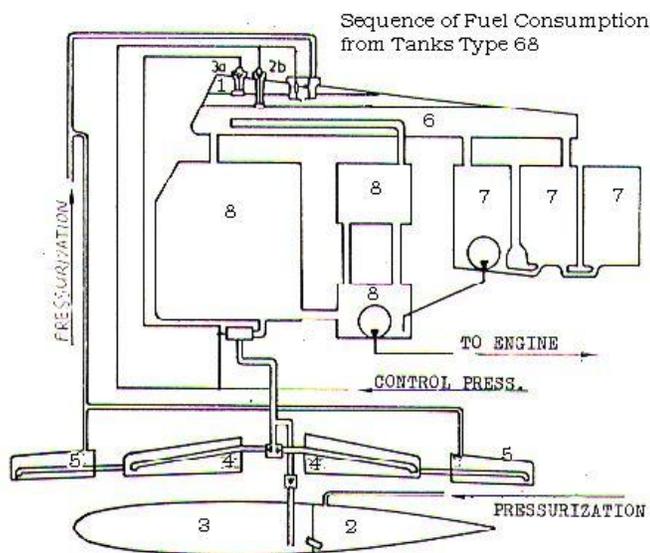
### Editor's Column:

Spring is here, time to start moving:

- Time to dust off winter's cobwebs and caring for the outside of the house.
- Prep the flower beds and fertilize the lawn.
- Spring cleaning is always a pain but necessary to clear away the stale smell of winter in a closed-up house.
- Time to take off the snow tires and have the car serviced for the warm weather ahead.
- It's never too early to clean the grill and start cooking outside. Cook some ribs for me.
- 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:  
Ben Galloway  
3732 Bar 10 Road  
Calhan, CO 80808

but I blew that off as why would anyone hire me for something like that and my other thought was that something like that really only happens in the movies. I was even hesitant on telling my folks I had received orders to Nellis AFB as I was unclear as to what I would be doing and where exactly I would be. I thought to myself I would ask my Father he of course would know as he had worked at the base for some years himself, and once again all he could tell me was is that indeed there was a squadron there and that was all he knew. I found this extremely strange and settled into my normal routine waiting for my sponsor package to come and fill in all the blanks.

The day came I received my sponsor package and boy howdy that cleared things up like pea soup. Simply no real info, a cryptic letter that might as well have been redacted from my sponsor, my report date and time, all it did was get me more wound up and interested, however it did have a phone number and a name of my sponsor and surely this person could and would shed some light on everything for me. Every question I asked



MiG-21 Fuel Sequence

was answered with; "when you get here you will be told everything you need to know". At least he verified I would actually be stationed at Nellis AFB and I was very pleased and yet I could not get him pinned down on if I would actually be working at Nellis. My sponsor SSgt Jody Merrill was less than forthcoming with any information (not rude but very matter of fact with his answers), my repeated calls only resulted in the same ending each time, me more confused and what became his standard response, "I would learn all I need to know when I arrived". Frustrated and full of wonderment and anticipation I could hardly wait and to make things even more aggravating I had a wife who wanted to know everything as well and of course I had no answers for her or myself. I read every piece of paper in my sponsor package at least 3 times and so did my wife trying to

figure out exactly what I would be doing and where I would actually be working as we were told by friends that we might be stationed at Indian Springs or some other place. Time dragged and finally the day came to head to Nellis and all my answers, anticipation was over the top.

Upon my arrival I of course signed into the unit where I was met by Jody and then it happened, nope, no real answers instead I was told I would now be sitting in a bunch of briefings and signing a lot of forms and then I had to get my clearance and then, and then and then. Seriously my anticipation was at an all time high, I had finally figured out I was indeed in one of those special units, I wasn't sure why they had chosen me but I wasn't going to tell them they made a mistake, I had decided that I would just do my very best and hope they kept me. I still had nothing I could tell my wife short of at least confirming that we indeed



would be living in Las Vegas and that seemed to appease her. I must have sat through at least 8 briefings, half of which I had no idea what they were even saying, I just knew at some point someone was going to say they had the wrong guy. The one thing I got very clear was what I was going to do was secret and I could not tell anyone, I didn't have the heart to tell them my Father had already told me what I was going to be doing. See he showed me his latest Poplar Mechanics with what appeared to be a F-117 on it and said this is what you will be working on, of course he was very, very wrong. I had to endure almost 8 weeks of sitting around waiting for my clearances and such before I could even go to work or I was even told I would be flying to work and what I would be working on, and of course my first thought was I wanted to tell the world, but that wasn't going to happen nor could it at the time.

I had arrived, the day had come, I went to work and boy howdy I was stunned, even being told was nothing as neat as the real thing. There was no way I can describe the euphoria of being in the 4477<sup>th</sup>. I guess there was still enough kid in me to think this was neat as hell and it was all super spy stuff and I nearly laughed my butt off seeing the F-117 just down the road, I knew right then that I had got the better of this deal. I met the greatest of people all be it some of them were downright crazy, but they were still great.

Something still bothered me, how did I get selected for this assignment? Believe me I didn't think I was anything special or had done anything special to deserve to be with these guys doing this job so I finally asked Jody why I was selected. His re-

sponse will always be one the most curious things I can recall in my AF career, he said, "my wife knows you". I was dumfounded, what did his wife knowing me have to do with it. Well it seems that it came down to 3 choices for this job and of course they had every detail of our lives and Jody had noticed that his wife and I had graduated from the same high school in the same year. So he asked her if she knew me and she did. Apparently I was an OK guy in high school and she gave him a favorable response. Sadly we did not travel in the same circles and I was not aware of her that much as she was smart and I was a jock.

So Karma, kismet, chi, fate, call it whatever you like, it pays to do the right thing for the right reasons no matter who is looking or not looking. You never know when that will lead to exactly what you want or somehow help you down the road in a totally different situation. My years with the Red Eagles were great years, the people of the unit made it what it was and I will always be grateful for them hiring me and affording me the time with my family.

*Harry Kepler*



### Letter of Nomination for Richard Samanich

Gail Peck has submitted a letter to nominate Richard (Sam) Samanich, SCWI (Senior Certified Welding Inspector), for the American Welding Society's Distinguished Welder Award.

Gail went on to say in his letter of recommendation:

During his tenure as a Red Eagle, he contributed to making the Air Force, Navy and Marine aviators the best in the world. Without maintainers like Sam, this secret squadron would not have been possible. The fact that replacement parts were not available to us meant we relied on the ability of our maintainers to manufacture new parts by reverse engineering them or finding ways to make the parts that we couldn't obtain. Every day was a new job and welding challenge. Sam got those jobs done.

I have the utmost respect for these men; they worked outside of the lime light and produced some of the most outstanding

work in the USAF without any recognition except for personal job satisfaction.

It is time to change that silent appreciation and acknowledge the contributions of those that made things happen that contributed to the overall security of the United States of America.

It is an honor to recommend Richard "Sam" Samanich for this prestigious award.

Sincerely,

Gaillard R Peck, Jr  
Colonel, (Retired), US Air Force

## Red Eagle Alumni Association Business

The Christmas edition of the newsletter gave you some information on 'what has been done and where we are'. Now that our organization has been in existence for over 18 months, we need to move forward on a couple of issues that are moving to the top of the 'to do' pile.

**First - We need to start planning for the next reunion.** The consensus of the Board, after taking input from you, was that major reunions should be held every three years – this makes 2014 the year for our next major event. So, it's time for some additional inputs from you, the REAA Membership, on two very important, initial elements: composition of the Reunion Planning Committee (RPC) and suggestions for the location of the reunion. On the first topic, the interim Chairman of the RPC is Mike 'Scotty' Scott. If you have a desire to participate on the committee, please contact Scotty. Once a committee has been formed, the committee will organize itself. On the topic of location, for various reasons – Nellis, accommodations, committee member location, etc - Las Vegas has been the de-facto choice in the past. However, the Board is open to other locations. So, Scotty would also appreciate some input from you on that topic, Las Vegas or other (include a suggestion). Scotty's email: [mikebon-scott@cox.net](mailto:mikebon-scott@cox.net).

**Second – We need to elect three new Board Members.** There are six elected positions on the Board – each is for a term of four years. Our initial election, however, had three designated two year terms so that we could initiate staggered Board turnover – those three positions are held by Phil Young, Ike Crawley and Jim Keys and we need to elect their replacements – or them, again! The four year term of service will begin on 1 Jan 2014. Please send your interest or a nomination to Jim 'Bluto' Keys at [jkeys@keysearch.net](mailto:jkeys@keysearch.net) . We need the inputs NLT 1 May.

That's it for this quarter – as always, if you have questions, concerns, ideas, or whatever - feel free to contact any member of the Board.

*Mike Scott*





RED EAGLES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

**APPLICATION FOR ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Military or Civilian \_\_\_\_\_

If Military – Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Branch \_\_\_\_\_ Years of service \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_

Work phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Justification for applying for associate membership, (your connection to the Red Eagles)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Attach additional sheet if necessary)

**AUTOMATIC ASSOCIATE** – The following may join the REAA by submitting an application to the board for approval and attaching a check for the annual dues, (\$25.00).\*

1. USAF, USN, and USMC staff personnel that supported the Red Eagles from the origination of the concept through 31March 1988.
2. Spouses and children of deceased Red Eagles (exempt from paying dues).

**NOMINATED ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP** – The following may submit an application to the board for approval, accompanied by a letter(s) of nomination from an REAA member(s). Application must be accompanied by a check for the annual dues, (\$25.00)\*.

1. Any US military MiG pilot or maintainer – (single letter of nomination from an REAA member).
2. Special associates of the Red Eagles – (five letters of nomination from REAA members).

\* Checks submitted for dues should be made out to: Red Eagles Alumni Association

Please mail completed application and nomination letter (s), if required, and check for dues, (if required), to:

John Nelson  
4016 Spring Crest Lane  
Las Vegas, NV 89129