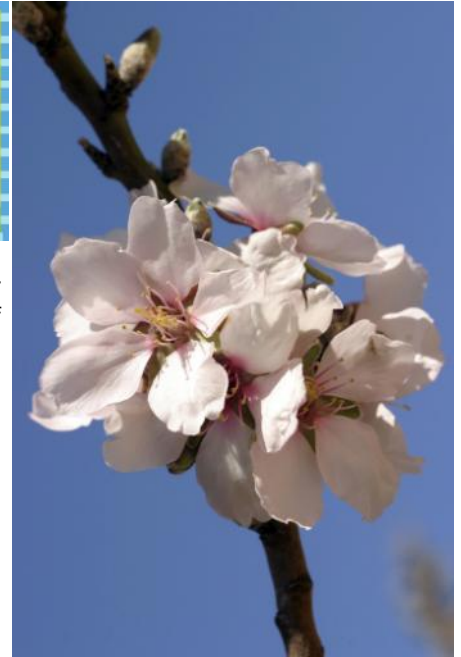


RED EAGLES NEWSLETTER SPRING 2015



March 31, 2015
Issue 24

FELLOW RED EAGLES: SPRING ISSUE



Editor's Spring Column:

Spring is here, time to start moving:

- Time to dust off winter's cobwebs and start 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: 4477redeagles@gmail.com
- Or, mail to:
Ben Galloway
3732 Bar 10 Road
Calhan, CO 80808

Red Eagles Reunion 2016

After discussing pros and cons, it was decided at this past reunion to have the next reunion in two years, 2016; and that the site would be the Dayton, Ohio area with the objective of centering it at the AF Museum at Wright- Patterson. A goal for that reunion is to have it coincide with the opening of a Red Eagle Display (ref paragraph B); the Reunion Committee will strive to make that happen. Since the 2014 reunion, Ted 'Gabby' Drake has agreed to lead the 2016 Reunion Committee and is in the process of forming it up. Ted has already been in contact with the Museum; although their reservation calendar was quickly filling, Saturday 10 Sep 2016 was a favorable autumn open date so the Board voted to nail it down. When details have turned from Jell-O to cement, the actual agenda will be published - expect that to be in early 2016. Until that time, just know that the next Red Eagle Reunion will be held at Dayton Ohio during the weekend of 10 September 2016. Save the date!

Mike Scott

Update

As previously announced, the next Red Eagle Reunion will be held 8-11 September 2016 in Dayton, Ohio. The main dinner will be Saturday, 10 September at the National Museum of the United States Air Force (NMUSAF) "Under the Wings" in the Modern Flight Area. Due to the large number of aviation related attractions in the Dayton area (including the NMUSAF and several Wright Brothers related historical attractions), this reunion is scheduled for 4 days instead of the usual 3 days of previous reunions. Tentative agenda and pro-

jected costs will be available this summer and will be finalized toward the end of 2015. Please save those dates and plan to attend. It should be a memorable event. We hope to see you there.

Ted Drake



Red Eagles White and Black Star Patch

Aside from being the editor of the Red Eagles newsletter, I sometimes serve as the point of contact (POC) for the Red Eagles and answer email inquiries about our squadron and its mission. Back in September of last year I received an email from Alan Johnson in Cheshire, England. He wanted to know about the myth, which is often stated as fact, of the white star/black star Red Eagles patch. That would be the myth that the officers of the 4477th wore the Red Eagles patch with the white star and the enlisted personnel wore the same patch but with a black star. One can only guess how this ever got started. If you ever mention to someone that you worked at the Tonopah Test Range area (Other terms were: Nevada Test Site, Nellis AFB Range, Department of Energy Test Area and several other names) you can watch the expression on their face as their mind starts to compile a long list of questions for you. You would most likely be asked about any and everything from space aliens to the Aurora hypersonic spy plane. While we did work at the mysteri-

ous site up North of Las Vegas, aside from working on unique planes and equipment under unique circumstances, our day-to-day activities were rather routine for the most part. What I mean by routine is that the Red Eagles figured out how stuff worked that they had never seen before, on aircraft they had never worked on before, without any tech manuals, limited parts and doing it safely. All this was done routinely every day to produce safe, flyable MiGs for air combat training of our military pilots.

I have often heard "never let the facts get in the way of a good story". That being said, you can understand how some self professed expert on the Nevada test site would just fill in the blanks with unsubstantiated facts to make the story all the more interesting. The other thing that is often said is "the first liar doesn't stand a chance". How true that is. This particular email from Alan Johnson struck a chord with me and I decided to give him an honest answer to his question. Who knows, he may spread the word and the world may eventually get this white star/black star Red Eagles patch rumor straightened out. One can only hope. Below is the actual email I received from Alan Johnson and my response to him. I have arranged the emails so you can read them straight down instead of reverse reading.

On Mon, Sep 1, 2014 at 3:32 AM, alan j wrote:

Hello,

Saw on your web site the 4477th patches (TEF, TES White and Black Star) all of which I have in my collection. I have a question: I have seen it mentioned on the web in general that the 4477th TES Black Star version was for enlisted men is this correct?

Regards,

ALAN JOHNSON

From: [Red Eagles](#)

Sent: Monday, September 01, 2014 4:23 PM

To: [alan j](#)

Subject: Re: 4477th patches

Alan,

Thank you for your interest. The short answer to your question is no, that is not correct. The same patch was worn by officers and enlisted personnel. The uniform worn would display the proper patch for that uniform.

Yes, on occasion I have read the same thing in several posts, articles and so forth. I can't correct every instance of this so I just console myself by sighing and shaking my head. The Air Force has never designed or designated a squadron patch in an officer/enlisted version. That is why rank is always displayed on one's uniform. The Air force, as well as the other branches of our military, does how-

ever usually have two versions of a squadron/unit patch. One is shown with all the colors the squadron patch is designed in for use on dress/special uniforms, unit letterhead as well as signs on squadron buildings and offices. The second version of the squadron patch is a subdued version in which the bright colors of the original squadron patch are replaced with a darker color. In the instance of the 4477th patch the white star is made black. These subdued patches, no matter which branch of the military or rank, are worn on flight suits, camouflaged fatigues or BDU's (Battle Dress Uniform) which might be worn in a hostile environment or war zone to diminish a serviceman's visibility to the enemy.

Thank you again for your interest in the Red Eagles.

Regards,

Ben Galloway

MSgt, US Air Force Ret.

Red Eagles Editor and POC

From: alan j **Date:** Mon, Sep 1, 2014 at 10:01 AM

Subject: Re: 4477th patches

To: Red Eagles <4477redeagles@gmail.com>

Sir,

Thank you for the very quick reply and for the confirmation of the Black Star patch. It must get frustrating when you see it wrongly identified.

My interest lies in High Flyers (U-2 / A-12 etc) plus Groom Lake and Black Programs.

Just got a book about the MiG Testing at Groom Lake "MiGs over Nevada" and MiG Exploitation Projects at Area 51 by TD Barnes. TD Barnes worked at the AREA and on the MiGs and is the President of Roadrunners International and I know him well with being an Associate member of this group and attending the reunions in Las Vegas. Been meaning to get the book "Constant Peg" for a while and that is now a must as that will carry on from TD's book.

I have my own web site for the High Flyers and Special projects and I'm in the process of doing a major site update so I can ensure that the Black Star patch description is correct and cross check the 4477th History dates when i do that page.

<http://www.u2sr71patches.co.uk/area51.htm>

Many, Many thanks,

ALAN

ALAN JOHNSON

CHESHIRE, ENGLAND

Recently I was searching the web for Red Eagles information. One of the main sites I came across was Wikipedia. Their article on the Red Eagles contained misinformation about our squadron patch and the white star/black star myth. I know I can't always change things but in this particular instance I took the time to open a Wikipedia member account and submitted a request to change the information on our squadron patch. I don't know if this will ever happen or how long it may take. However, nothing beats a try but a failure.

Update: Wikipedia has made the changes I had requested for labeling the Red Eagles white star/black star squadron patch with the correct information. See this link:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4477th_Test_and_Evaluation_Squadron

Ben Galloway

Riding with Chico and Billy

Back in the day, and I'm talking about 1980 and for the next several years, we would acquire various vehicles from DRMOs across the Southwest for use at the site up North. Included in that inventory there were a couple "staff cars". One was a black U.S. Navy, early '70s Ford Maverick and the other was a late '60s, Air Force Ford Custom 500. We sanded off the doors on the black Maverick to remove the "U.S. Navy" and spray bombed them black. On the Ford Custom, we sanded the whole car and change the color from blue to white. Bobby Ellis pretty much claimed the Maverick and used it to travel back and forth to Las Vegas from the site. The Ford was a secondary vehicle and was used frequently in trips between the site and Las Vegas. It seems I was destined to take more than a few trips in the white Ford. On the majority of these trips the driver was either Billy Lightfoot or Chico Noriega. On more than one occasion I rode with both of them at the same time on the trips to the site.

As you can guess by Billy's last name, he was part Indian. He was always interacting with and collecting critters both dead and alive, up at the site. We had a variety of animals and critters to choose from: coyotes, kid foxes, hawks, ravens, rattlesnakes, blow snakes (similar markings to a rattlesnake and it would scratch the ground with its tail to imitate one), scorpions and tarantulas. Billy brought an injured raven with a broken wing inside the shop to nurse it back to health. The raven eventually died several days later but not before pooping all over the floor of the shop. Down in the front of the shop there was a coyote hide he was trying to tan nailed to a sheet of plywood that he would douse with salt a couple of times a day during this same time frame but this is another story.

We had several M-151 jeeps at the site. Operations had one

Jeep and Vehicle Maintenance and AGE had the other two. On one occasion Doug Robinson was using the AGE Jeep so I borrowed Billy's Jeep to go up to the hangar. Back then all the roads around our shop and the area behind the hangars were unpaved. I started the Jeep and glanced at the passenger seat and saw a cardboard box about a foot high with a topless 3 pound coffee can sitting on top of it. As I drove up to the hangar, the coffee can kept shifting around on the top of the box. Every time it moved, I would stick my fingers inside the can and my thumb on the outside of it to position it back in the center of the box top. I finally arrived at the backside of the hangars and turned the Jeep off. It was then that my curiosity got the better of me about that coffee can. I had reposition this coffee can more than a few times to the center of the box on my trip up to the hangars. So, I grabbed the lip of the can and tilted it slightly towards me and glanced into the bottom of the can. I could feel the blood drain from my face and my mouth went a little dry as I viewed the contents. There in the bottom of the can were no less than six or seven really pissed scorpions with their tails waving in the air. I spent the next 30 seconds trying to regain my composure while calling Billy every name I can think of.

One of the other pastimes shared by Billy and Chico was collecting dead rattlesnakes and skinning them to make hat bands. The majority of the finds were snakes that had been run over by vehicles at the site and brought down to the AGE/Vehicle shop to be skinned. On occasion Billy would encounter a live rattler and dispatch him, skin him and fire up his "Fry Baby" deep fryer and make snake nuggets. I found out about this little "Snake nuggets" thing only after I had returned to the site in the Kenworth one day around lunch time and he offered me some nuggets. I don't know what I was thinking, I assume they were chicken nuggets but I was wrong. After I had wolfed down three nuggets I glanced at Doug and he was shaking his head slightly. Of course I said "What"? And he said "How's that rattlesnake taste"? At this point I really have to admit, it did taste like chicken. I had flashbacks to Korea when I had eaten at a restaurant in downtown Osan. After I had finished eating what I thought was a beef dish, the waiter said to me in broken English "Most G.I. no like dog". It seems I had ordered the Gaegogi (Kay'-go-kee), which is dog with rice instead of the Bulgogi (Ba'-go-kee) which is beef with rice. I often refer to this as the time I had gotten my "Gogis" mixed up. I was having that same déjà vu moment when I found out I had eaten snake. The dog and the snake were actually good and I didn't get sick or die from it. I added two new rules to dining out: 1. Make sure I know what I'm ordering and 2. If you are trying some new type food and enjoying it and someone asks "Do you know what you're eating?" stop them right there and tell them to go away.

This little "Dead snake collecting" hobby of Billy and Chico carried over to include our trips from Las Vegas to the site. This is the back stretch of highway with the infamous black mailbox is referred to now as the Extraterrestrial Highway. Most of the time I would just relax and let Billy or Chico do the driving while I tried to catch a nap. They had placed an empty cardboard box in the trunk for the expressed purpose of collecting dead rattlesnakes on the way to the site. It was not uncommon for them to stop three or four times to collect dead snakes if they weren't too badly mangled. I never gave this much thought and considered it as a relatively harmless endeavor. I never thought of the downside to this and the frequent stops other than taking a few minutes longer to get the site. On this one particular trip, Chico was driving and he had stopped three times and recovered a dead rattlesnake each time, placing them the cardboard box in the trunk.

We drove for another 45 minutes or so to the site and parked the Ford in front the AGE/Vehicle shop. We got out of the Ford and went to retrieve our bags. I think there were a total of four people in the Ford that particular day if my memory serves me correctly. As we collected our bags and started to go our separate ways, Chico told us all to stop and put our bags down. Of course we thought he was joking and ask what the hell's going on? That's when he informed us that there were only two rattlesnakes in the box instead of three. We all stopped and looked at each other and then looked at our bags. It was not readily obvious where the third snake, resurrected from the dead, had slithered off to. Chico found a stick and was poking around the trunk hoping to get a signal from the rattlesnake but that didn't happen. We all moved away from the Ford and went into the shop and dumped out our bags to make sure the snake hadn't coiled up inside of one of them. Where that rattlesnake went was a mystery. But, to error on the side of caution, we opened all four doors on the Ford for the rest of the day hoping the rattler would escape. Not knowing whether the snake had actually left the vehicle, we closed all the car doors and locked the vehicle for safety sake. Three days later we decided to check the vehicle and it was obvious by the smell that the snake had expired. I'm not sure how I got saddled with the job of locating the dead snake and removing it but I got the job. After careful search of the vehicle and looking in the very last place, I located the dead rattler. He had crawled up behind the instrument panel and was stretched out across the wiring harness. I had to use a pair of pliers to remove him in three sections.

After two weeks of letting the Ford set with the windows down inside the shop and a whole lot of air freshener later, the Ford was returned to service. Bobby Ellis wasn't too thrilled about having the Ford out of commission for a couple of weeks. Thus brought an end to collecting dead rattlesnakes on the way to the site, in a government vehicle, by Billy and Chico!

Ben Galloway

An email footnote from Doug Robinson:

Good story Ben! I believe your facts are right but then again, my memory is not what it used to be. I do remember riding up to the site in the 15 passenger van we had with Billy driving and me lying down on one of the bench seats to sleep. The next thing I remember was waking up on the floor of the van after Billy spotted a snake on the road and hit the brakes! I don't think I was the only one that happened to in those days!

Doug

2014 Reunion Photos

Neil Henderson and his associate were at the 2014 Red Eagles Reunion events on October the 17th and 18th in Las Vegas. Neil has provided us with a web link to view some of the photos that were taken at that time. Click on the link below to view:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d0voiqmh3ejizzq/AAA3y8qLaHJUUp-aDeBehfOaa?dl=0>

Red Eagles Web Sites of Interest

Red Eagles web site: www.4477reaa.com

Red Eagles Facebook page. Please feel free to request to join the group: <http://www.fbjs.facebook.com/groups/75655098950/>

Col Gaillard Peck's book "America's Secret MiG Squadron: The Red Eagles of Project CONSTANT PEG" is available from Gail directly.

Gail Peck can autograph and personalize books for Red Eagles for \$25 +S/H (usually @ \$5). These books can be ordered by email or snail. If email, use the gtwestern@aol.com and include BOOK ORDER in the subject line. If ordering by snail mail send him a note to 8039 Leather Harness St, Las Vegas, NV 89131. In both cases remind Gail who the book is for and something about the recipient's RED EAGLE service. And, don't forget to tell him where to send it. He will autograph, personalize, send and then let you know the cost.

Also, His web site is www.gaillardpeck.com and he has lithos of our jets for sale along with the picture book that was introduced at the last reunion.

BTW if you order directly from Gail the REAA will get a cut on books and lithos.

The Red Eagles Store

We now have a variety of new items available and ready for sale in the Red Eagle Store. Prices includes shipping and handling. When ordering more than one item you can email or contact me to adjust the shipping cost.

Please send check or money order made out to the "Red Eagles Alumni Association" or "REAA" and enclose a note with the name of the item you want, how many, what size for shirts and where to send it.

Send to:

Ben Galloway
3732 Bar 10 Road
Calhan, CO 80808
719-683-8945
bgalloway5@elpasotel.net



Red Eagles Tee shirt, sizes S, M, L, XL, 2XL- \$17.00



4477th Farkel Dice Game- \$6.00



4477th Lapel Pin- \$6.00



Coins, front and obverse



4477th Unit Coin- \$6.00



4477th Reunion 2014 Poker chip- \$4.75



4477th Red Eagles Poker chip- \$3.75



MIG-17,21 and 23 Lapel Pins- \$6.00 each.