



FALL QUARTER

NOVEMBER 2009

Tennessee Valley Flyer

“ACROSS THE TENNESSEE VALLEY FROM
CHEROKEE TO FORT PAYNE”

Chapter Celebrates U.S. Air Force Birthday



Celebrating AF 62nd Birthday

On Sept 15th, in honor of the Air Force’s 62nd birthday, the Chapter hosted its inaugural AF Birthday Celebration.

With approximately 60 people attending, Brigadier General (Ret) Gary Connor, the guest speaker, described it as an “oasis of blue in a sea of green.” Col Al Kemmet, Deputy Director of the Missile and Space Intelligence Center, was the Master of Ceremonies.

Prior to the General's speech, the Chapter took the opportunity to present an award to our Chapter's Outstanding Civil Air Patrol Cadet, Cadet 1lt Jonathan Allen. A senior this year, Jonathan plans to pursue AFROTC at Auburn University.

Brig Gen (Ret) Connor, former Deputy Program Manager of the Ballistic Missile Defense System with the Missile Defense Agency, reflected on what air, space, and cyber-space power brings to the joint fight today, how it has evolved over it's 62 years, and the challenges tomorrow holds.

The audience was reminded that it was during World War I, that the air truly became a separate battlefield, alongside the battlefields of land and sea and that by war’s end, visionaries, such as Billy Mitchell were espousing

that “The day has passed when armies on the ground or navies on the sea can be the arbiter of a nation’s destiny in war...the main power of defense and the power of initiative against an enemy has passed to the air.”

Gen Connor also spoke about the significance that airpower had during World War II and the audience was honored to have 4 members of the Army Air Corp within it's midst.

Today's we are seeing continuing evolution with the

advent of Global Strike Command to address our nuclear forces to the increased focus with cyber security through AF Cyber Command. He concluded acknowledging the actions of Airmen and their families to build upon a tremendous heritage of integrity, service and excellence and the global impact that Airmen make spans the spectrum of conflict, all the while defending the homeland. Then challenged the young cadets in the audience to continue the heritage of service before self and the excellence of the US Air Force.



Four of the Chapter’s Army Air Corps Veterans

Tennessee Valley AFA Chapter Conducts Annual Elections

As announced in our last newsletter, the Tennessee Valley AFA Chapter conducted its elections this past October. To accommodate members whose travel schedules couldn’t accommodate holding the election at a General Meeting, the Executive Council decided to open the

nomination and voting to the email. In addition to an email, the call for nominations was also posted on the Chapter’s web site.

The actual election was conducted from 19 - 22 October. A total of 30 members voted.

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Gen Connor was presented with an autographed copy of "Surviving Hell" by Col Leo Thorsness (retired), an AFA and USAF Medal of Honor winner residing in the Huntsville area. The evening concluded with the ceremonial cutting of the cake and a rousing chorus of the Air Force song.

This year’s officers are:

Chapter President:

Rick Driesbach

Chapter Vice President:

Greg Smith

Treasurer: Jack Royster

Secretary: Russ Lewey

AFA National Convention

This year's AFA National Convention was held at the Gaylord National Hotel and Convention Center (for those familiar with the DC area it sits just east and south of I-95 and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, in National Harbor, MD). Tom Gwaltney, Alabama AFA State President and a member of the Alabama delegation, said that the Gaylord was a magnificent venue; a giant leap forward in comparison to the previous venue of over 20 years "Marriott Wardman Park" in Washington DC.

The Convention was opened on Sunday morning, 13 Sept. with what has become a tradition at the Air Force Memorial where AFA delegates and others gathered to honor the memory of fallen compatriots.

As part of the Convention, Tom Gwaltney indicated that the entire Alabama AFA delegation met with all of our State Legislators; to include Congressman Griffith. "We talked to the Obama Healthcare Bill, as well as to the Tricare issue. All said they supported zero increase to Tricare fees or loss of any associated benefits." Tom went on to indicate that the visits were well received.

A key item adopted by the Convention was the AFA Top Issues for 2010 :

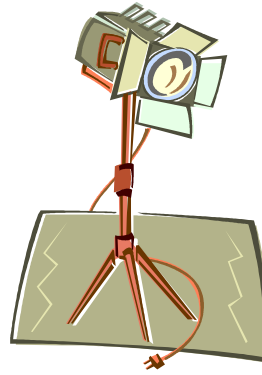
1. Supporting our Airmen
2. Recapitalizing the aging fleet
3. Strengthening the nuclear enterprise
4. Securing space and cyberspace
5. Developing Air Force people; educating airpower professionals
6. Investing in Airpower

For additional information on the convention and the AFA Top Issues, go to the AFA web site (www.afa.org) or the November Issue of the AF Magazine.

Particularly noteworthy, was the ratification of an action to raise AFA dues, not to exceed 25% (e.g., 1-year \$36 to \$45, 3-years \$90 to \$110, and life \$500 to \$600). Exact implementation date is to be determined, but in no case will it be earlier than June 2010.

Cyber Patriot Update

For anyone that may not know, Cyber Patriot II is a unique and innovative competition that AFA is sponsoring to enhance cyber security skills. This year, teams from all Air Force Junior ROTC (AFJROTC) and Civil Air Patrol (CAP) units were allowed to participate in this advanced network security exercise. Nearly 120 teams have participated to date in the two qualifying rounds of the competition that took place on November 1 and 9, 2009. Next, the top 36 teams competed in a Medalist Round which was held on November 21, 2009. The top eight winners from the Medalist Round will travel to Orlando, Florida, for the national Cyber Patriot II competition on February 19, 2010, as part of the Air Warfare Symposium.



Spotlight on Redstone Federal Credit Union

Early this quarter Redstone Federal Credit Union became the Chapter's newest Community Partner. In addition, Redstone Federal Credit Union

welcomed the Chapter as a Service Group member. Recognition as a Service Group allows our members to join Redstone Federal Credit Union.

Founded on 28 November 1951, **Redstone Federal Credit Union** (or **RFCU**) is Alabama's largest, local, member-owned financial institution. Based in Huntsville, Alabama, RFCU serves more than 308,000 members and employs more than 750 people. RFCU has grown to 20 branches across North Alabama and Tennessee. With over \$2.5 billion USD in assets, RFCU is 38th nationally in assets and 18th in membership within the Credit Union industry as of June 30, 2008.

Products and services offered by RFCU range from typical savings and checking accounts, to Business Services for Sole Proprietorships.

The Investments & Insurance Services Division also offers a wide variety of investment and insurance services.

RFCU has a full service Real Estate department which offers a multitude of mortgage products like Adjustable Rate Mortgages, Fixed Rate, Construction, Flexible Mortgages, and HELOCs.

RFCU participates in the BALANCE Financial Fitness Program which is a free financial counseling service available to RFCU members. Counselors work with members to help avoid or resolve financial distress and establish personal financial control.

RFCU has over 68 ATMs, Alabama's first Xtreme ATM, and a Mobile ATM that is utilized per community request. RFCU is part of the AFFN, CIRRUS, CO-OP, Presto! and STAR networks for domestic ATMs and the AFFN, CIRRUS, and CO-OP networks for international ATMs.

For more information go to their website at: www.redfcu.org.

The 36 teams that have qualified for the Medalist Round are from 20 states. Also, 20 were AFJROTC teams and 16 were CAP teams. Locally, we are happy to report that the AFJROTC Team from Huntsville High School was one of the 36 teams that successfully qualified for the Medalist Round. The results of the Medalist Round have not yet been released.

We wish LTC (Ret) Hollis Bagely and his AFJROTC team at Huntsville High School a successful outcome in the Cyber Patriot II competition. Stay tuned for the results of this year's competition and also for details on the AFA's 2010-2011 Cyber Patriot III competition, which will hopefully be bigger and improved.

Special Highlight from the Army Air Force Days

By John Phillip

Four World War II Army Air Force veterans attended our chapter's Air Force Birthday Celebration in September. We would like to highlight the service of one of those veterans - Howard "Chris" Christiansen.

Born in Rankin, Illinois, Chris grew up as a dedicated student with a six-year perfect attendance record. After graduating from high school, he volunteered for the US Army in October 1942. He wanted to get into aviation and become a pilot; however, he did not meet the two-year college requirement to become a pilot. He did score high on the military testing and was put into a training track to become a bombardier. He received his initial classification training in Nashville, Tennessee, and Santa Anna, California. Next, he was off to bombardier training at Kirtland Field in Albuquerque, New Mexico, graduating with a bombardier rating in July 1943. He went on to receive extensive B-17 phase training in Spokane, Washington, Ardmore, Oklahoma, and Kearney, Nebraska. Finally, with some radar training, Chris was assigned to the 346th Bomb Squadron of the 99th Bomb Wing at a B-17 air base near Foggia, Italy in February, 1944.

Chris was amazed at the fire power that many very young men could pack into an armada of nearly 200 bomber aircraft that would form up for an attack into southern France, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, or Germany. Chris played a critical role in each bombing mission. First, after reaching altitude, Chris and the radioman had to move to the bomb bay and pull a pin out of each bomb so it could be properly armed. Next, the bombardier's duty was to accurately drop bombs on their intended target using the complicated, but effective, Norden bombsight. This advanced hardware accounted for the plane's altitude, airspeed and the impact point. After the bombardier locked the



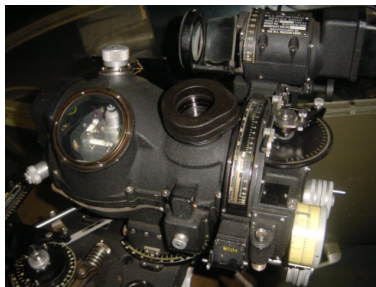
**Army Air Corps Veteran—
Howard "Chris" Christiansen**

optical sight on the intended target, the bombsight actually released the bombs at the correct time. On one notable mission, April 23, 1944, Chris was part of an attack that crippled aircraft production at a factory near Vienna, Austria, for which the 99th Bomb Wing received a Presidential Unit Citation.

Chris also participated in the second attack on the refineries at Ploesti, Romania and flew five additional missions over this critical petroleum target. Additionally, Chris explained how the 99th Bomb Wing participated in the first "shuttle run" on June 2, 1944, as a unique tactic to confuse and overcome the Germans on the Eastern Front. The planes of the 99th took off from their home base in Italy, hit their target, but then recovered at a fully stocked B-17 base in Poltava, Ukraine.

The Poltava base provided the bombers with an opportunity to replenish the aircraft and strike another German target before finally returning to Italy.

Oddly enough, fifty-two years later, on August 20, 1996, and on behalf of the Russian people, President Boris Yeltsin awarded each member of the 99th Bomb Wing a special "Commemorative Medal



Picture of the Norden Bombsight

for their courage and personal contribution to the Allied support of Russia during her fight for freedom against Nazi Germany". The Russians felt that the "shuttle run" using Poltava played a significant role in defeating the Germans in Eastern Europe. Chris proudly displays this award in his home.

Chris was able to safely carry out 51 B-17 missions, although the goal in Italy was only 50 missions. US bombers flying out of England only had a mission goal of only 35 flights because those attack routes were more heavily defended by the Germans and more planes were lost in the England campaign.

"Mission Accomplished" came in August 1944 for Chris and he returned to the United States. He left the active Army Air Force but stayed in the Reserves as a combat photographer. Next, he and Sue deGafferelly were married in 1946. Then, in 1949 he graduated from Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, Illinois, as a business major. With his military training in photography and the new degree, he started a business in photography, which he successfully operated for 12 years. Later, he taught mathematics in a junior high school in Danville, Illinois.

As a member of the US Air Force Reserves, he was assigned to various Air Force bases. He will always remember one unique assignment at Andrews AFB, Maryland, in August 1963, where he was able to film President Kennedy numerous times as he was departing and arriving the base.

Later, a cousin talked Chris into relocating to Huntsville, Alabama in 1964. Chris transitioned to a career in procurement at the Redstone Arsenal. He retired from the Arsenal in 1988 and then spent five years working for COLSA Corp. He formally retired in 1993.

Chris and his wife Sue currently live in Huntsville. Chris is happy to spend time with his three children, nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Chris is especially proud that he is a "lifetime member" of the Air Force Association.



December General Meeting to Hear From Expert on Russian Strategic Forces

On Dec 3rd the Chapter will host its Quarterly General Meeting at the American Legion Post 237 Hall (2900 Drake Ave, Huntsville).

Our guest speaker for the evening will be our Chapter's own Lt Col (Ret) Wilt Burwell who will speak of his experiences while serving for the Defense Threat Risk Reduction Agency (DTRA) and its pre-cursor, the On-Site Inspection Agency (OSIA). There



is renewed interest in arms control and talks with the Russians with the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) scheduled to expire this December. Lt Col Burwell will describe his experiences gained as a nuclear weapons inspector with over 30 inspections into Russia and the former-Soviet Union.

Another highlight of the evening will be when Alabama State AFA President, Tom Gwaltney, will present to Col (Ret) John Phillip the AFA Medal of Merit awarded during the September's National AFA Convention. A lynch-pin for much of the Chapter's activities, John is being recognized for his work in support of our aerospace education mission.

Finally, we look forward to presenting our newest Community Partner, Redstone Federal Credit Union with their plaque and officially welcoming them into the Chapter.

Following the close of the formal part of the meeting, attendees are invited to adjourn into the American Legion Lounge for further camaraderie.



Air Force Association Tennessee Valley Chapter Upcoming Events

3 Dec @ 7:00 pm— 8:30 pm
Chapter's Quarterly General Meeting
American Legion Hall
Post 237 (2900 Drake Ave, Huntsville)

7 Dec—Anniversary of Pearl Harbor attack

25 Dec — Christmas (Federal Holiday)

1 Jan — New Years Day (Federal Holiday)

18 Jan—Martin Luther King Birthday (Federal Holiday)

4 Feb—Chapter's Quarterly Meeting (Tentative)

15 Feb — Presidents Day (Federal Holiday)

TAPS

It is with deep sorrow that occasionally our Chapter has to say good bye to our own. This issue highlights the passing of two of our members, Col (Ret) John E. Dickson and Col (Ret) Carver T. Bussey.



Members are encouraged to notify the Chapter upon learning of the death of our members. We will work to ensure that National and others within the chapter are notified.

Colonel John E. Dickson
Jan. 4, 1936 - Sept. 1, 2009

Born on Long Island, N.Y., in 1936, John graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1958. He opted to go with the U.S. Air Force and served a total of 27 years. During his career he flew EB-47s and B-58s. In Vietnam, he served as a navi-

gator on EB-66s, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for finding the first SAM site in Laos. After the war, he served with 6514th Test Squadron developing drone technology. His Air Force career later took a turn toward space. His final assignment for the Air Force was

when he became the director of safety for the Eastern Space and Missile Range at Patrick AFB, Florida, where he oversaw the first 18 Space Shuttle launches. John attained the rank of colonel and retired in 1985. After his military retirement, John work for SRS Technologies for 13 years.

Colonel Carver T. Bussey
July 22, 1916 - Oct. 14, 2009

Carver Bussey was born in Hartsville, S.C. After graduating from The Citadel in 1938, he was commissioned in the Army Air Corps, where he became a flight instructor dur-

ing pre-war preparations. This was the beginning of a 25-year career as an Air Force pilot, which included an assignment as a bomber pilot in World War II. While in the Air Force, Col. Bussey earned a master's degree in business administration from the University of

Pittsburgh. In 1962, after retiring from the Air Force, Col. Bussey opened the Republic Aviation office in Huntsville, where he became active in the community. Col. Bussey was a charter member of the Metro Kiwanis Club, serving twice as its president.