

AFA 335

TENNESSEE VALLEY FLYER

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ALL IN PERSON AFA CHAPTER 335 EVENTS CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE DUE TO COVID-19



Tennessee Valley AFA Chapter President, John Pennell, and LTC (ret) Randy Withrow, Director of the Huntsville Veteran's Museum, honor WW II US Army Air Force veteran, Lt Bill Varnedoe, on his 97th birthday with a cake decorated with the 8th Army Air Force logo. Lt Varnedoe flew 27 combat missions as a B-17 Navigator in WW II and set-up the very realistic 8th Army Air Force briefing room at the Huntsville Veteran's Museum. He was also a prolific cave explorer with the Huntsville Alabama Grotto of the National Speleological Society, and is a vertical cave preserve within the city limits of Huntsville, AL, named after him. He did not just explore caves, and serve his country; he was also the first Chief of the Huntsville Cave Rescue Unit and served in the position from 1955-1960 and 1962-1966, helping rescue people from cave and cliff accidents.

For more information about this true American hero, please listen to his Library of Congress recording at:
<http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.00444/>



AFA Chapter 335 Galaxy of Lights Support Team December 2019

Tennessee Valley Chapter Supports Botanical Garden GALAXY OF LIGHTS

By Rick Driesbach

For the 9th consecutive year, the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the Air Force Association (AFA) supported the Huntsville Botanical Garden's Galaxy of Lights by providing 20+ volunteers to direct traffic and collect entry fees. In 2019, like all previous years, a merry group of chapter members, spouses, and teenage children came together for an evening of service, fun and good old Air Force camaraderie. This year the Air Force team facilitated over 750 car loads of people on their way to enjoying the seasonal Galaxy of Lights on 26 December, 2019. The team consisted of 22 volunteers including incoming President John Pennell and outgoing President Rick Driesbach.

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The Last Full Measure Movie Night

By Ken Philippart (Images by Lisa Philippart)

Members of the Tennessee Valley AFA Chapter met for dinner and a movie on February 1, 2020. The movie was The Last Full Measure, the story of US Air Force pararescueman A1C William Pitsenbarger and the efforts to award him the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions during the battle of Xa Cam My in Vietnam. AFA senior leadership encouraged chapters to see the movie together to honor and publicize Pits' sacrifice.

Nine chapter members and spouses met at P.F. Chang's restaurant at the Bridge Street Center prior to the movie for dinner and camaraderie.

After a relaxing meal and socializing, the group walked to the Cinemark Bridge Street Theater to see the movie that starred Samuel L. Jackson, Christopher Plummer, Peter Fonda, Ed Harris and Jeremy Irvine. The movie was a riveting and touching tribute to A1C Pitsenbarger's heroism and sacrifice. The film brought his inspirational story to the general public for the first time and conveyed the values of service and sacrifice to which all Airmen aspire.



Thank you to Daryl and Barb Carpenter, Bryan Bennett, Jack and Biddy Royster, Ken and Lisa Philippart and Eric and Christina Silkowski for an enjoyable evening of camaraderie while honoring a true American hero.



USSRC Scholarship

For the second year in a row, the chapter has offered a scholarship to send a student to a US Space and Rocket Center camp. The scholarship has been award-able to the children and grandchildren of chapter members. This year, the daughter of retired Colonel Daron Drown was the awardee. Anna Drown was selected by a group of five members of the Executive Council who evaluated the scholarship essays submitted by each of the applicants. She and her parents will now coordinate with the US Space & Rocket Center on which camp she prefers to attend (Space Camp, Aviation Challenge, or Robotics Camp) and which date is mutually agreeable. Congratulations to Anna Drown on this great opportunity!



(Left) Anna Drown

*(Right) Col (Ret) Daron
Drown and his daughter
Anna*





United States Space Force

by Albert L. Robertson, Jr. "Rob"
Lt Col, USAF (Ret)

Master Space Badge Awardee -
Space Launch - Space Operations - Space Acquisition

Space has become a highly contested and critical environment. Operating the nation's space assets is vital to the Air Force's mission to win in Air, Space and Cyberspace. As a nation, we do not go to war without Space Assets' integral role in the joint fight kill chain. Recognizing the ability to acquire, operate and secure space assets is critical to our Nation's security. The DoD's efforts to consolidate national defense space responsibilities into a single command-and-control center and encourage additional organizational and technological innovation to support the joint warfighter is a necessary step for the security of this nation. Space acquisition processes to include requirements development must be streamlined. Integration of joint forces has enabled the United States to achieve military supremacy for over 30 years. Improved joint and combined space asset operations and timely delivery of critical capabilities for all services must continue.

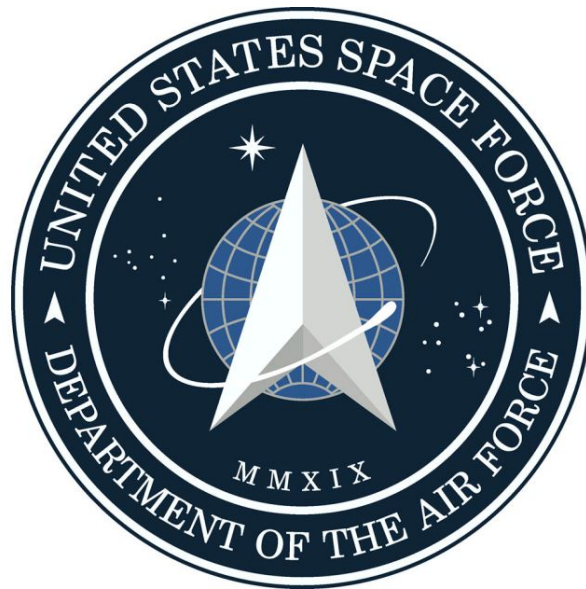
I spent 28 of my past 40 years preparing boosters during the integration and launch of spacecraft, acquiring spacecraft, supporting commercial communication satellite launches, and building a U.S. military space communication architecture plus my time with NRO satellites.

We discussed back in the '80s the possible need for a unified space force to integrate all space activities to include launch, satellite procurement, and range support. We observed the Army, Navy, and Air Force wanting specific capabilities from space and usually none were the same. We have all the services wanting different capabilities on orbit and usually at cross-purpose to the other services' needs. We attempted to appease all services by putting satellites on orbit that meet some of the needs of the services but not all the specific needs the services want.

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In the '90's and early 2000's, several requests were made by OSD about views on standing up a separate and distinct space force. It was bantered about for years while the tough decision to do it or not needed to be made. Many discussions and white papers were written about standing up a joint service taking all requirements into account for all services, setting priorities, and developing the necessary technologies to consolidate capabilities, all services will continue to put in their space requirements exclusive of what the other services need. A joint Space Corps or Service was desperately needed by this country to do this. As the POTUS said while addressing the service members at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar on March 13, 2018, "Space is a war-fighting domain, just like the land, air and sea."

This has been a long time in the making. Those of us who grew up in the "space community" are proud that it has finally happened.



[Information About the Space Force From Spaceforce.mil](https://spaceforce.mil)

"The U.S. Space Force (USSF) is a new branch of the Armed Forces. It was established on December 20, 2019 with enactment of the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act and will be stood-up over the next 18 months. The USSF was established within the Department of the Air Force, meaning the Secretary of the Air Force has overall responsibility for the USSF, under the guidance and direction of the SecDef. Additionally, a four-star general known as the Chief of Space Operations (CSO) serves as the senior military member of the USSF. The CSO is a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

Mission

The USSF is a military service that organizes, trains, and equips space forces in order to protect U.S. and allied interests in space and to provide space capabilities to the joint force. USSF responsibilities include developing military space professionals, acquiring military space systems, maturing the military doctrine for space power, and organizing space forces to present to our Combatant Commands."

**For more information about the US Space Force, please visit
spaceforce.mil**

US Air Force's First C-130 Tactical Airlifter

C-130A, Hercules, Serial #55-0023

by Carl Penaranda



C-130A, 55-0023 at Dyess AFB, TX, Linear Air Park

The Aviation Weekly, Dec 3, 1956 edition, states “In the Lockheed [now Lockheed-Martin] C-130A, Hercules, combat transport, Tactical Air Command [now deactivated] will be getting an airplane of tremendous versatility.” “... First deliveries ... will be made to TAC’s 463rd Troop Carrier Wing next week” --- the Wing was then stationed at Ardmore AFB, OK.

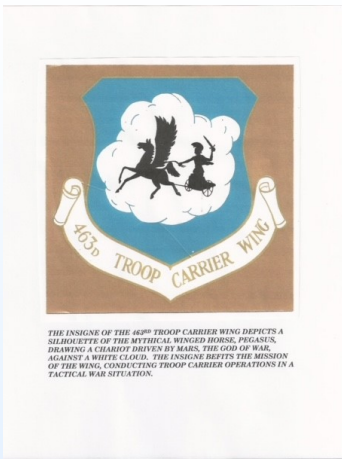
“Next week”, encompassed, Dec 9, 1956, when the 463rd received this remarkable new tactical airlifter. The C-130A received, bore serial number 55-0023 and it not only represented the first worldwide model, but also the first production model. It was assigned to the Wing’s 774th Troop Carrier Squadron, and shortly thereafter christened the “City of Ardmore”.

Unbeknownst at the time was how successful and important the C-130 was to become. It evolved into numerous variants and has the longest running production line in history [a milestone was reached Oct 21, 2019, when LM delivered the 2,600th C-130, a Combat Talon MC-130J, Super Hercules, Commando II, to the USAF Special Operations Command]. The Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association held its 2012 biannual reunion at Warner-Robins, GA (nearby Robins AFB, houses the C-130 depot). The highlight of the reunion was visiting the LM C-130 plant at Marietta, GA, where we learned 70+ countries and commercial carriers were flying the C-130.

With receipt of the new C-130, 463rd squadrons --- 772nd, 773rd, and 774th --- transitioned from their C-119s, Flying Boxcars, to the new aircraft. The Wing received 48 C-130As, with each squadron receiving 16 each. It was during this time, the Wing and Squadrons created new unit emblems. The 463rd TCW new emblem illustrated “a silhouette of the mythical winged horse, Pegasus, drawing a chariot driven by Mars, the god of war, against a white cloud”.



774th TCS Four Horsemen C-130 Demo Team



463rd
TCW

THE INSIGNE OF THE 463RD TROOP CARRIER WING DEPICTS A SILHOUETTE OF THE MYTHICAL WINGED HORSE, PEGASUS, DRAWING A CARTON DRIVEN BY MEN, THE GOD OF WAR, AGAINST A WHITE CLOUD. THE INSIGNE BEFITS THE MISSION OF THE WING, CONDUCTING TROOP CARRIER OPERATIONS IN A TACTICAL WAR SITUATION.



774th
TCS

[“The insigne befits the mission of the Wing, conducting troop carrier operations in a tactical war situation”, was also part of the emblem’s description.] It was designed by MSgt Palmer D. Bryan, NCOIC of the Wing’s Communications Section.

The creator of the new 774th emblem is unknown. It portrayed a globe with a superimposed “green weasel” --- the squadron’s patch was later modified to add a red lightning bolt to honor its Four Horsemen C-130 demonstration team, formed at Ardmore AFB. I learned some skeptics thought the green weasel was a mongoose. When I joined the 774th TCS at Langley AFB, VA in April 1963, it was definitely a green weasel unit.



The insignia described is the original (C-130 airlift era) 774th tactical airlift historical (heritage) emblem, not the one representing the 774th TAS and 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, portrayed by a four-leaf clover with a super-imposed green weasel.

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Retention of its original emblem was suitable for the Command's the 774th was initially assigned to, after the deactivation of TAC. Unless told differently, over the years there was no change to its tactical airlift mission, nor changes to unit aircraft assigned, having flown the C-130 since 1956. Request anyone familiar with replacing the original emblem with a new one, kindly provide me with the rationalization for doing so.

The original 774th emblem represented start of the units' C-130 heritage, and follow-on achievements. TAC's C-130 assignments included supporting US and overseas (US Air Forces in Europe, Pacific Air Forces, and Southern Command) contingency and humanitarian taskings. As a result, the 463rd and other tactical airlift Wings, began their airlifter history under TAC, which in its day was a one-stop combatant Command, having tactical airlift and fighters, recon-naissance aircraft, Special Operations, "fly away kits", personnel, and supplies to support its deployed units in the field. TAC has long since been deactivated and is unknown to many. Our participation in USAF and joint military service exercises and other stateside and overseas operational commitments came to a halt in Nov 1965, when the 463rd and Squadrons (its three original --- 772nd, 773rd, and 774th --- plus the newly acquired 29th TCS from Forbes AFB, KS --- were ordered to the Philippines in a Permanent Change of Station move to support the Vietnam war effort. The impact of the war on the 463rd is described at the end of this article.

I was not successful learning the origin of the "green weasel". If readers know, likewise pass the information to me. I found no evidence the 774th referred to itself publicly as a "green weasel" squadron when equipped with the C-119. However, internal to the unit, personnel could have referred to themselves as "green weasels". I say this because when the Squadron transferred from Memphis Municipal Airport, TN, to Ardmore AFB, OK, it was referred to as the unit whose C-119s had green noses.

After 33 years of service, 55-0023 was deactivated Oct 9, 1989. Prior to its deactivation an Ardmore City resident, Jimmy (spelling from research document) E. Brady Rose, began a quest to locate 55-0023 to have it, when deactivated, returned to her city for static display. After all, it made sense, since it was christened the "City of Ardmore". She was surprised to learn, the military personnel contacted were unaware of 55-0023's historical significance. She did locate the C-130 in time to save it from destruction, because it was scheduled to be outfitted as a target drone to be destroyed by heat seeking missiles in a training exercise. It was retrieved and refurbished by LM, but instead of being given to Ardmore City, was sent to Dyess AFB, TX. Dyess AFB was the next-to-the-last place the 463rd was stationed and deactivated. It was later reactivated at Little Rock AFB, AR, where once again it was deactivated.

A photo of 55-0023 on display, showed it no longer had the "The City of Ardmore" painted on its fuselage. It bore the 463rd insignia, and had its history documented on a plaque near the aircraft. According to the plaque, it was donated, April 20, 1991, by the men and women of the 463rd Tactical Airlift Wing. Its original "Troop Carrier" designation is displayed on its fuselage. The designation Troop Carrier came about during World War II, and was subsequently changed to "Tactical Airlift", and again changed to the generic "Airlift". The latter designation includes both the tactical (combat) airlift mission, a responsibility of TAC, and the strategic (logistical) airlift mission, a responsibility of the Military Air Transport Service, which later became Military Airlift Command. Both airlift missions are now consolidated under the Air Mobility Command. The two differing airlift cultures are best described in a Jun 19, 2012, Stars and Stripes newspaper article. Its correspondent mentions "... fliers of smaller rougher planes that land daily at forward operating bases around Afghanistan, swoop low between the mountains and parachute supplies into isolated outposts ... Strategic airlift may deliver the bullets from the United States, but the tactical aircrews put them in the hands of soldiers --- sometimes in the middle of a firefight."

The 1968 Vietnam rescue of the damaged 55-0023, prevented it from being added to the 53 tactical airlift unit C-130s lost (1962-1973) in the war. The attack on 55-0023 confirmed the C-130 was an attractive target; some referred to it as a "Mortar Magnet". Of the 53 C-130s lost, the 463rd lost nine --- five were shot down and four were destroyed on the ground; 45 personnel were lost in crashes, and many more were wounded.

Recognition of Rick Driesbach as "Fellow of the Association"

Chapter President John Pennell presents retired chapter President Rick Driesbach with "Fellow of the Association" Certificate from the Air Force Association recognizing Rick's 11 years as President of the Tennessee Valley Chapter. John Pennell also presented Rick with a beautiful acrylic plaque from the chapter in commemoration for his years of service as Chapter President. We are all indebted to Rick for his outstanding leadership; we always know you were quite a "Fellow" Rick!



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Want to become a Community Partner at the Ace, Wingman, or Basic level?

Contact Bryan Bennett at bryanlbennett@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 16 Jul: *Executive Council Meeting*
- 20 Aug: *Executive Council Meeting*
- 18 Sep: *Air Force Birthday*
- 7 Nov: *Cullman World War II Fly In*

Chapter 335 Officers

- **President**
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- **Vice President**
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- **Secretary**
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Chapter 335 Special VPs

- **Aerospace Education:** Jay Carlson
- **Community Partners:** George Krym/
Bryan Bennett
- **CyberPatriot:** Bob Hovde
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