

Blackbird Association

The 17th Blackbird Association reunion was a great success! Around 390 people were there during the 4-day event, an increase from the 2005 reunion. We received many favorable comments on the new West wing location for the registration/hospitality room. Hopefully, we will be in the same area for the 2009 reunion. Put these dates on your calendar now—

The next Blackbird Reunion will be held **June 11-14, 2009**

Seating for the Saturday night banquet started promptly at 1930 with a slide show of all the speed runs accomplished by Blackbirds. The MC was once again, Joe Kinego, doing an outstanding job at the podium and making the evening perfect. His quick wit and humor is a winner on stage and at the bar. After introductions, Pat Halloran gave the invocation.

Leland Haynes and T.D. Barnes put together a slide show (with music!) of people from the past to enjoy while dining. It was as professional as anyone could ask for. A big thanks to Leland and T.D. for all the volunteer work putting a super show together.

We thought it was appropriate to recognize an important piece of aviation history that has been forgotten over the years...speed record holders. Joe Kinego talked briefly about the records that Hal Confer, Gray Sowers, and the HABU crew of Tom Estes and Dwain Vick set.



Rich Graham
habu5@verizon.net

Fred Carmody
u2sr@calis.com

Jim Wilson
jrwilson@surewest.net

Pat Halloran took the podium and mentioned the Jerry O'Malley Memorial Foundation.

The guest speaker for the evening was General Kevin Chilton, Commander, Air Force Space Command, Peterson AFB, Colorado. In 1999 General Chilton was the 9th Wing Commander at Beale AFB and former Space Shuttle astronaut. His presentation was outstanding! It kept everyone's attention, was topical for the audience and just the right length to sustain interest. General Chilton said he had a fabulous time, enjoyed the hospitality, seeing more than an expected number of old friends, and making new ones.

The Kelly Johnson Award, a lifetime achievement award, was presented to SMSGT (ret) Mike Relja for his numerous contributions to the Blackbird program. Well done Mike!

Many of you enjoy the vendors who participate in our reunions and use the opportunity to stock up on your SR-71/U-2 shirts, hats, coffee cups, etc. We apologize for their absence at the reunion, but a last minute illness of the sales staff of our primary contributor, the Lockheed Employee Recreation Club, precluded their attendance. They are excited and committed to attending Reunion 2009, as we hope you are!.



Reunion & HABU Info



1st SRS Memorabilia

The SR-71 squadron's artifacts have been permanently moved from the Omaha Museum to the National Museum of the USAF in Dayton, Ohio. To fund the move, donations were sent in from former crew members, maintenance, tech reps, and intel folks. The response was overwhelming! Over \$3,300 was contributed and after the bills were paid, the remaining money was donated to the Jerry O'Malley Memorial Foundation and will be used for General O'Malley's exhibit/museum area to be located in Carbondale, Pa. Included in this exhibit will be a model SR-71 and other significant memorabilia of Jerry's association with the SR-71 program.

The move took place in early October. This was not an easy task...moving around 2,000 pounds of squadron artifacts cross country. Under the leadership of Pat Halloran and our Habu volunteers in the Omaha area, everything went as smoothly as possible. A moving company was hired to make the move. The Omaha group included Charlie Daubs, Harlon Hain, Lee Shelton and Harlon's daughter, Alesa Hime. On hand to receive the artifacts was Joe Hofle, staff member of the museum. Thanks to each of you!

2005 & 2007 Video Presentations

Leland Haynes produced another presentation in a DVD format for the **2007** Banquet with four chapters: New York-London 1974 speed run; the 1976 speed/altitude records; Beale AFB today (U-2 and Global Hawk ops); and 250 images of folks associated with the Blackbird Programs over the last 25 years.

The **2005** CD-ROM format banquet PowerPoint presentation includes a 25-year history of the SR-71 and U-2 Blackbird achievements; Earth photos taken from a U-2 at 70,000 feet, photos of prominent people that have contributed to the success of the Blackbird programs and a 14 minute movie presentation of the SR-71 takeoff, touch-and-go landings, refueling with a KC-135Q tanker and close-up aerial shots of the SR-71 in-flight, including afterburners lighting. The CD-ROM also contains a PowerPoint Reader that can be installed on your computer if you do not have PowerPoint. Go to the following web site to order your copy of either or both presentations:

http://www.wvi.com/~sr71webmaster/PayPal_Order.htm

Golf

The Tourney was held on Saturday at the Northgate course with approximately 55 players. The course management dictated we were to play a four-man alternating shot format and then inserted another group ahead of us who refused to follow that format—resulting in very slow play and frustrating a number of our players to quit early.

That being said—Ben Raines did a marvelous job orchestrating the Tourney and will hopefully be available to do so at Reunion 2009. Though he says he did not start the fire that played out on the opposite mountain, Ben is taking credit for the incredible airshow of fire fighting aircraft and helicopters! Ben is also promising a better course—we have played there in the past—which is located in the hills and protects players from the wind. A friendlier format will also be used.

The Tourney is self-sustaining—no money is drawn from the Association to supplement the cost...other than borrowed front money for a course reservation.

Winners for this event were a tie between the pairing of Tom Veltri and Joe Matthews (possibly better known as a song and dance team) and Al Joersz with Jack Madison (Gen Joersz has promised to provide a putting clinic for those who arrive early at the next event).

Numerous gifts were provided to the players at the course—should you be able to provide other similar momentos (golf balls, tees, hand towels, golf bags, etc) for the 2009 Golf Tourney please contact the Association, with our thanks.

Photos and Graphics

Have any Reunion 2007 photos (with names of subjects) or SR-71 or U-2 Graphics to share?

Please send them to:

emckim@san.rr.com or

Blackbirdmail@aol.com.

Photos will be posted on E.D. McKim's website (HABUS.com)



DragonLady Reunion

The next U-2 reunion will take place **25-28 September, 2008**. The event will be held at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in downtown Sacramento, featuring Gen Kevin Chilton as the guest speaker and Bryan Anderson again assuming duties behind the podium

Jerry O'Malley Biography

Air University Press has recently published a biography of General O'Malley by Al and Patrick Casey "***Velocity, Speed with Direction: The Professional Career of Gen Jerome F. O'Malley***". It is available on-line at: aupress.maxwell.af.mil. Download from this site is free. The book can be ordered by calling 334-953-2773. The book is free to active/retired military personnel and to civilians of government service who are active/retired.

CIA Dedication Ceremony

On September 19th, at CIA Headquarters, a dedication ceremony was held to honor the recent acquisition of an A-12 (article 128) to their museum. The ceremony was attended by A-12 pilots, Ken Collins, Jack Layton, Frank Murray, and Denny Sullivan. Spouses and family members of the deceased A-12 pilots were also present.

The dedication ceremony was held outdoors under a large pavilion tent with food and drink provided. The guest speaker was General Hayden, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. His speech was right on the mark! After the ceremony, the museum director, Toni Hiley, gave a personal tour of their indoor CIA Museum. She calls it, "The world's largest museum not open to the public."

Autographed copies of a new 55-page booklet titled, "***Archangel: CIA's Supersonic A-12 Reconnaissance Aircraft***" were available to attendees. The CIA Chief Historian, David Robarge, was on hand to autograph and talk about his booklet. Hundreds of CIA documents pertaining to the A-12 program were declassified in conjunction with the dedication ceremony. Copies of the booklet can be obtained at 202-512-1800 or via the internet at: orders@gpo.gov

Ed Yeilding Inducted into Alabama State Hall of Fame

On 13 October Ed Yeilding was inducted into the Alabama Hall of Fame in Birmingham, along with three other inductees. Among the 250 attendees were Bob Gilliland, B.C. Thomas, Ed Bethart, and Jim Halsell. Each inductee was shown a seven minute "This Is Your Life" type video produced at Maxwell AFB. After Ed's acceptance speech they unveiled a plaque to be permanently displayed at the museum. In Ed's own words, "The likeness on my plaque doesn't look much like me, but I'm not complaining as it looks better than I do!"

Pat Bledsoe Inducted into State Hall of Fame

On November 15th Pat Bledsoe was inducted into the Arkansas Aviation Hall of Fame in Little Rock. Attending with Pat was his wife Carole, their daughter Melanie, granddaughter Greta and two of his sisters with their husbands. HABUs B.C. Thomas and Ed Yeilding were on hand for the ceremony as well.

HABUs at Oshkosh

Every year at the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Headquarters in Oshkosh, WI, there is a world class air show sponsored by the EAA. It goes on for seven days and this year the dates are Monday, July 28 through Sunday, August 3. It is the kind of air show anyone associated with aviation could put on their "bucket list" before they checkout...it is an amazing air show with myriad military static displays and airborne flying. The F-22 Raptor has been stealing the airshow scene recently with its dazzling performance. In order to see everything there you may want to allow for two full days.

One of the most difficult parts of going to Oshkosh is finding a place to stay. Booking a hotel room in Fond du Lac (about 20 min drive to EAA) may require a full year advance reservation! Some have obtained dormitory rooms at local colleges that offer them for rent and provide daily transportation to and from the air show.

Over the last few years we've put on an SR-71 Symposium on each Saturday, with 5 or so Habus on the panel. There might be more Habus show up than can participate at the Saturday event, but at the same time, we might be able to hold some other Habu panels in their forum tents that run daily. They also have an "authors corner" where book authors can meet, greet and let EAA sell their books (lots of paperwork though).

Although they get close to one million visitors over the seven days, the venue is so large you should never feel crowded. Handicap vehicles for those who can't get around easily may be available, but you would have to check on that. Visit their web site at: www.airventure.org

Those with an interest in attending or possibly sitting on one of the numerous panels may contact Rich Graham: habu5@verizon.net

SR-71 Symposium at March AFB Museum

On October 13-14 the March AFB Museum (Executive Director Patricia Korzec) hosted a group of Blackbird pilots, RSOs, maintainers, and intel folks to talk about the SR-71 program. Jim Shelton did all the coordination with the Museum and arranged for a very nice welcoming dinner, along with a book signing and wine tasting at the March AFB Club on Friday night. A few crews were even seen having a few hooks in "Sally's Alley," a well known bar/memorabilia hangout behind the former Officers' Club. A breakfast was held both Saturday and Sunday inside the museum's C-141...very unique!

On Saturday evening the museum hosted a first-class, catered dinner party outside with Rich Graham as the Guest Speaker. The tent was located directly in front of their SR-71 which was illuminated with red and white spot lights. Just prior to dinner everyone got a kick out of hearing the recorded sounds of a Buick winding up during engine start. The participants were placed at various tables to mingle with the local community contributors and supporters of the museum. The museum staff and volunteers went out of their way to make everyone feel special and very much at home.

Those participating in the Symposium were Jim Shelton, Buz Carpenter, Don Campbell, Jack Veth, Maury Rosenberg, Don Walbrecht, Frank Stampf, Gil Bertelson, Pat Halloran, Rich Graham, Al Payne, Kurk Knutson, Ken Collins, Pat Bledsoe, Don Byrnes, Sid Segler, Tom Charters, and Charlie Schumacher.

SR-71 Scale Model Demo

Attendees at the Reunion were treated on Friday to an engine run of a 1/12th scale model of the SR-71, built by Grant Goodsell and Bill Sisson. Unfortunately, an engine test late Friday, before storing the model, resulted in a fire which did minor structural and cosmetic damage. They plan to finish up repairs, sanding and other detailing and will strive to do a test flight in late summer or early fall. The model weighs approximately 50 pounds, is 107" long, 56" wide, and each engine provides 28 pounds of thrust!

Kelly Johnson Award

This trophy was given to Mike Relja for a lifetime of contribution to the Blackbird Program.

The selection committee for this award for Reunion 2009 will be made up of previous winners of this coveted trophy using nominations from our Association membership.

Following our next newsletter, possibly in late 2008, but before Reunion packets are mailed out in early 2009, we will solicit nominees....it is not too early to start thinking of who you might wish to recommend to the selection committee.

Wine Bottles

For Reunion 2009 an effort to provide wine from the Indian Springs Winery in Nevada City is being considered. We would get both red and white wine, available to us on consignment, with a label featuring the SR-71 and its colorful history.

Details of Nevada laws and what type of sales are allowed must yet be considered as this would be available only at the Reunion, or directly from the winery. Wine for personal use or memento.

As this is only brainstorming your input, and interest, would be appreciated. Send those to:
blackbirdmail@aol.com

Reunion Committee

Rich Graham	Fred Carmody	Jim Wilson
	Co-Chairmen	
Dave Ebersole	Banquet & Reception	
Clyde Nickinson	Registration	
Caren Holder	Heritage/Raffle/Memorabilia	
Tommie Thompson	Hospitality/Memorabilia	
Ron Burton	Hospitality/Memorabilia	
Tony Bevacqua	Friday night special event	
Ben Raines	Golf Tournament	
Charles Steward	Hospitality	
Jack Madison	Newsletter	

Getting the Newsletter Out

Our newsletter is an orchestration of activities involving collecting articles, tracking down our "Lost" Members, writing articles, updating the ever-evolving database and finally the very mundane task of printing, folding, labeling and stamping the final product for mailing. The Blackbird Association would like to thank Chuck Woodward and Jerry Berger for their help in getting the newsletter out to all of you. Thanks Chuck and Jerry!

Association Moves/Retirements

Bernie Smith—American Airlines
Rod Dyckman—American Airlines
Rick Bishop—American Airlines

Gone but not Forgotten

Calvin Spangler Stretch Feild
Jack Esser Dan Zuck
Bill Ferguson O. B. Harnage
Jack Ledford

Internet Web Sites

E. D. McKim—www.habus.net
Leland Haynes—www.wvi.com/~lelandh/sr-71~1.htm
John Stone— www.blackbirds.net
DragonLady Assoc— www.u2dla.org
David Allison— www.habu.org
Paul Kucher—www.sr-71.org
RoadRunners—www.roadrunnersinternationale.com
Bob Stoner—www.habus.org
Larry Johnson—www.friendsoftheblackbird.com
Mike Troiano—miketroiano.com/beale.html
LERC—www.lmaeronautics.com/palmdale/lerc/

Some sites may require a " http://" prefix depending on your computer

Replacement Cards

Need a Replacement membership card?

Cost is \$3. Orders to:
Blackbird Association
18083 Foxtail Dr
Penn Valley, CA 95946
NLT 1 April 2008

Admin Items

As a reminder none of your personal info contained in the database will be given to others without your approval. Thus we will not provide address or phone number information to those within the Association or those who find you via the internet. We have, on occasion, forwarded self-addressed letters to our Members in search of old friends and co-workers.

Please take the time to review your address label and help us by updating any changes or additions/deletions. It seems the most often changed item is your e-mail address. Any updates, again, are confidential. Many Thanks for your help.

Send changes, with the Subject line "Update" to: **BLACKBIRDMAIL@AOL.COM**

LOST Members—We continually try to find our "lost" members and sadly the list continues to grow. We will publish the list in the next newsletter and humbly request your help in finding these Members.

Reunion Silent Auction

The Association would like to thank all who contributed numerous items for the Friday and Saturday night Silent Auctions as well as the raffle which took place in the Hospitality Suite on Saturday afternoon. Items included framed pictures, rare emblems, wood and glass art pieces, aircraft clocks featuring both the U-2 and SR-71, a hand-etched mirror with a U-2 cutaway, wine cork trivits, an SR-71 cribbage board and a Mach 3 Patch featuring numerous types of wood. Again, thanks to all who contributed and congratulations to those who now own bits of history and art.

If you would like to contribute for the auction and raffle please contact one of our Association chairmen whose e-mail addresses are listed on page 1.

***Blackbird Association
c/o Jack Madison
18083 Foxtail Drive
Penn Valley, CA 95946***