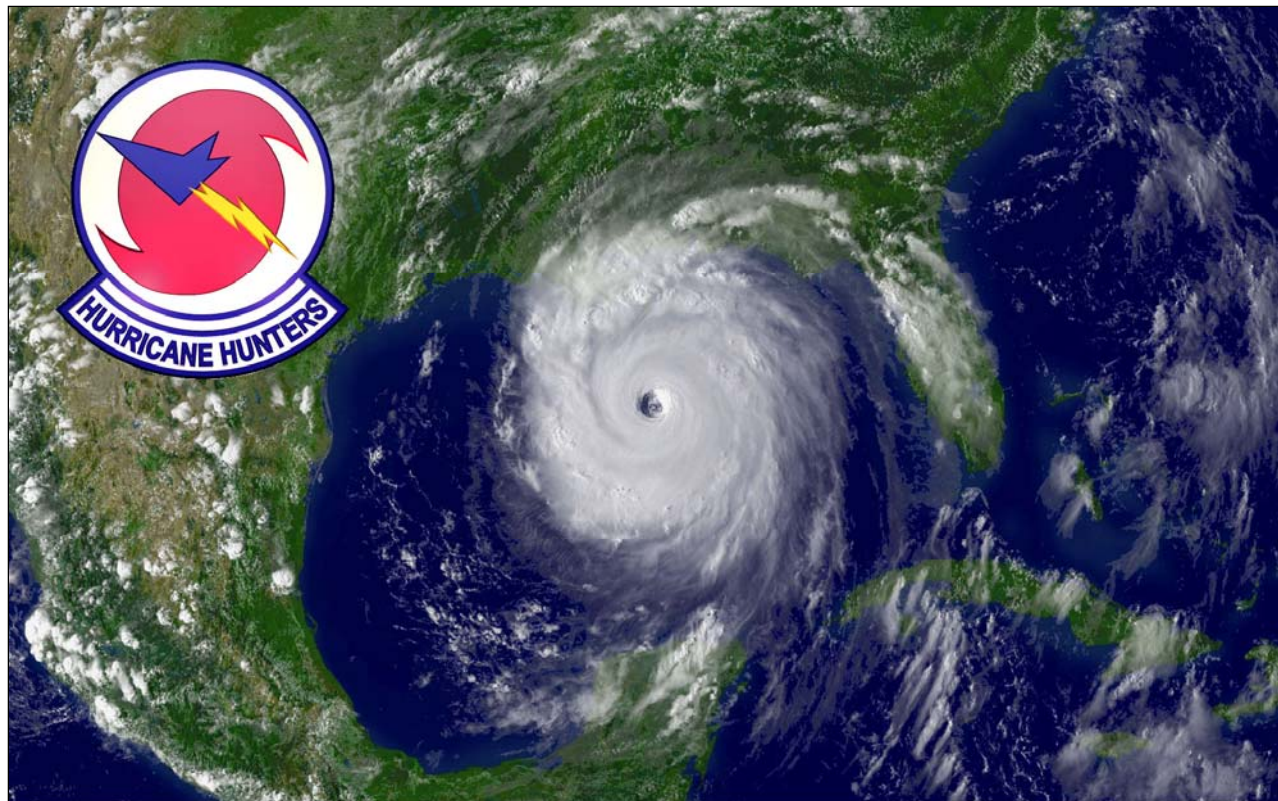




Air Weather Reconnaissance Association

Volume 22 No. 1

June 2014



Hurricane Katrina bears down on the Louisiana and Mississippi Gulf coasts on 28 August 2005. While the devastation caused by this storm was horrendous, it would have been worse without the crucial warnings put out by the National Hurricane Center. These warnings are made possible, thanks in part, to information from the USAF Hurricane Hunters. Official USAF Photo

THE HURRICANE HUNTERS

The story of hurricane reconnaissance in the Atlantic basin, including the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, goes back to WWII.

Most histories trace the Hurricane Hunters' story back to 27 July 1943, when Maj Joe Duckworth intentionally flew a T-6 Texan into a hurricane that had made landfall in east Texas. He twice penetrated the eye remnants, first with the Bryan Field's only navigator in the back seat, then with the base weather officer. At the time, Maj Duckworth was in charge of the USAAF instrument flying school, and sought to prove that there were no weather conditions that a well-trained instrument pilot could not survive. Despite numerous stories to the contrary, I cannot find any

contemporary reports that any bar challenge, or other bet, was involved.

Additional experimental flights were flown in 1943, proving that routine hurricane reconnaissance could be conducted by experienced instrument pilots operating suitable aircraft.

With Mother Nature's cooperation, we plan to hold our 2014 AWRA reunion in Biloxi. Our goal is to see how the successors to Joe Duckworth, the 53rd WRS (AFRES), handle hurricane hunting in the 21st Century.

Hope to see you there.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by G.D. "Stoney" Faubus, AWRA President

Greetings from the Pres.

Well, it's that time of year again. A great time was had in Sacramento for our last reunion. We had a great turn out with 90-plus in attendance.

This year should be another great one in Biloxi.

Chuck Lavoie and I did some leg work early this year and were able to set up what we think will be a fun time. The 53rd WRS will be our host, starting with a tour of their facility and their new WC-130 J's. Let's hope the weather is nice to us, as it is their storm season.

Melva and I are looking forward to seeing everyone again. Travel and live safely, hope to see many of you there.

Thanks again, and hope to see you in Biloxi,

G.D. "Stoney" Faubus

Hurricane Hunting Factoids

The concept of overhead tracking of storms, accomplished today by satellites, is not new. In Oct 1946, a 55th WRS B-29 flew over a hurricane near Cuba at 35,000 feet. Much was publically made of the fact that, now, a relay of B-29 aircraft could safely fly above storms, negating the need for more dangerous penetrations. Further tests in 1947 showed that most storms extended much higher than the aircraft of the day could fly. Oops.

Most of us are familiar with attempts to modify hurricanes, such as Project Storm Fury in the 1960's. This was not the first attempt. In 1947, the 53rd/373rd supported a USAF-sponsored seeding program, conducted by GE, that used Material Command B-17s. On 13 Oct 1947, seeding was conducted on an "old" hurricane that was heading NE from Georgia after passing over Florida. After the seeding, the storm made a hard left to a westerly track and slammed into Georgia. Double Oops.

We know that names like Camille, Katrina, and Sandy have been retired. But in reality, over 70 hurricane names have been retired since Hurricanes Carol and Hazel in 1954.



Hurricane Hunter Logos through the years. At left, Miss Hurricane Hunter 1956 highlights the 59th WRS squadron patch painted on their brand-new WB-50D that had just been christened "Bermuda Sunshine". At right, above, is the original 3rd WRS patch that was in continuous use by the 53rd until the lower patch was approved in 1963. Note that the nuclear sampling symbol is not on AFRES patch.

WHO CARRIED THE HURRICANE HUNTER BANNER?

Army Hurricane Reconnaissance Unit

The first dedicated hurricane reconnaissance unit was formed in 1944. Consisting of four hand-picked aircraft commanders and their crews, along with four slightly modified B-25 bombers, the Army Hurricane Reconnaissance Unit was assigned to the USAAF Weather Wing and placed under the operational control of the Army Hurricane Weather Officer at Miami, FL. During the 1944 storm season, these crews flew 48 missions into 10 tropical storms and hurricanes during all stages of their development.

1st and the 3rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadrons

Beginning in 1945, the USAAF hurricane recon mission was assigned to the 1st and the 3rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadrons with their B-25 and B-17 aircraft. Flew from bases along the East Coast, Bermuda, and Caribbean.

53rd Reconnaissance Squadron (VLR) Weather

In Nov 1945, the 3rd WRS was redesignated as the 53rd Reconnaissance Squadron, Long Range, Weather. The 53rd moved to Kindley AB, Bermuda in 1947, now flying the B-29 and B-17, and were the primary hurricane hunting outfit.

373rd Reconnaissance Squadron (VLR) Weather

As part of the formation of the new USAF, the 53rd was inactivated on 15 Oct 1947. All personnel and equipment were transferred to the "new" 373rd Reconnaissance Squadron (VLR) Weather. There was no change to the mission, and their RB-29 aircraft continued to provide data to the hurricane forecasters in Miami. 1950 saw major mods to the B-29, and USAF authorized the "W" prefix. All AWS B-29s became WB-29s.

53rd Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Med, Weather and A Flight, 53rd SRS

The 373rd continued to carry the Hurricane Hunter mantle until 1951, when another round of USAF changes saw the 373rd deactivated, and the 53rd reappear, this time as a Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron. Then, in 1953, the USAF moved the 53rd to England, leaving behind a smaller group of crews and WB-29 aircraft in Bermuda, as A Flight, to track hurricanes.

59th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron

1954 saw a major up-tick in hurricane activity along the East Coast. With Congress again interested in hurricane recon, AWS was allocated 66 B-50D being retired by SAC. In addition, the unit assigned to hunt Atlantic hurricanes was to be plussed-up to squadron level. In 1955 the 59th WRS was established on Bermuda to take over the Hurricane Hunting duties, using the newly acquired WB-50 aircraft. The 59th would carry on the Hurricane Hunter tradition until they were inactivated on 18 March 1960 as part of a USAF-wide effort to reduce the number of squadrons.

Det 3, 55th WRS and Det 7, 9th WRG

As a result of the USAF directives, the men and equipment of the 59th were transferred to detachment status, first as part of the 55th WRS, then to the 9th WRG. There was little change in unit size, and they continued to support hurricane recon with their WB-50Ds.

53rd WRS Returns

In Jan 1962, the 53rd WRS was reborn in Bermuda and acquired all of the assets of Det 7 and the Hurricane Hunter mission. In 1963, the squadron received their first WB-47E aircraft and moved to Hunter AFB. Their remaining WB-50D stayed in Bermuda and flew all of the storms during 1963. The WB-47 was never certified as a hurricane penetration platform. They often flew over and around storms, providing mainly eye location by radar. In 1964, the 56th WRS sent several WB-50Ds TDY to Hunter to provide hurricane data to the National Hurricane Center.

For the 1965 hurricane season, all five weather-modified WC-130B were transferred to the 53rd and moved to Ramey AFB, PR, for hurricane reconnaissance. After Hurricane Camille in 1969, additional C-130s were allocated to AWS and assigned to the various squadrons, including the 53rd.

In April 1973, USAF announced the closing of Ramey AFB. The 53rd moved to Keesler AFB, MS, and continued their Hurricane Hunter tradition with WC-130B/E and H.

815th WRS (AFRES) – The Reserves join the fray

In 1975, AWS transferred all of their flying squadrons to ARRS. At that same time, AFRC agreed to assume a portion of the weather reconnaissance mission. The three active duty units consolidated into two, and transferred several WC-130H to the 815th WRS (AFRES) at Keesler. HQ MAC certified the 815th as operationally ready prior to the 1976 storm season. Thus began a period of shared hurricane hunting between the 53rd and the 815th WRS. The 815th Storm Trackers were authorized additional full-time (technician) crews, compared to a normal reserve unit.

In 1987, the 815th reverted to an Airlift Squadron, with a residual weather recon flight still complementing the active duty 53rd WRS for hurricane hunting duties.

53rd WRS Deactivates, then is Reborn in the Reserves

On 1 Jun 1991, the active duty 53rd was inactivated, and the reserves became the sole hurricane hunting unit in the USAF. The 815th Weather Squadron assumed the Hurricane mission. On 1 Nov 1993, the 53rd WRS was reactivated as a reserve squadron, replacing the 815th WS.

In 1999, the first of ten new WC-130J arrived at the 53rd WRS. After overcoming some major hurdles, the WC-130J was declared operational prior to the 2005 storm season, and have flown all USAF Hurricane Hunting missions since then.

AWRA Officers

President	Stoney Faubus (See Directors List)
Vice Presidents (see note)	Peter Copesky (See Directors List)
Secretary	William Burnette (See Directors List)
Treasurer	Bob Tuttle 17444 Meadow Creek Dr Eagle River, AK 99577 (907) 694-4992
Historian-Archivist	Bernard Barris (See Directors List)
Membership	Bernard Barris (See Directors List)

Note: At the 2012 reunion, John Hug resigned as a Vice President and member of the BOD. AWRA is looking for nominees to fill the open Vice President position. Contact any officer with your suggestions.

Board of Directors

Ralph Ruyle (<i>Chairman</i>) 1502 W Mariah Way Fort Walton Beach, FL 325474 (850) 862-1571	
Bernard Barris 11019 Oaktree Park San Antonio, TX 78249 (210) 696-5072	William Burnette 1910 Crest Ridge Dr Papillion, NE 68133 (402) 502-3771
Charley L. Cooper 10837 St. Xavier Lane St. Ann, MO 63074 (314) 428-4379	Peter Copesky 4112 E Kilmer St Tucson, AZ 85711 (520) 514-8844
Stoney Faubus 1329 Hwy 395 N STE 10 – 242 Gardnerville NV 89410	Pat Hanavan 12402 Winding Branch San Antonio TX 78230 (210) 479-0226
Arnold Jarvis P.O. Box 776 Elephant Butte, NM 87935 (505) 744-5722	John E. Lein P.O. Box 41288 Charleston, SC 29423 (843) 522-5796
David Young 3800 Vista Circle Dr Lancaster, CA 93536	

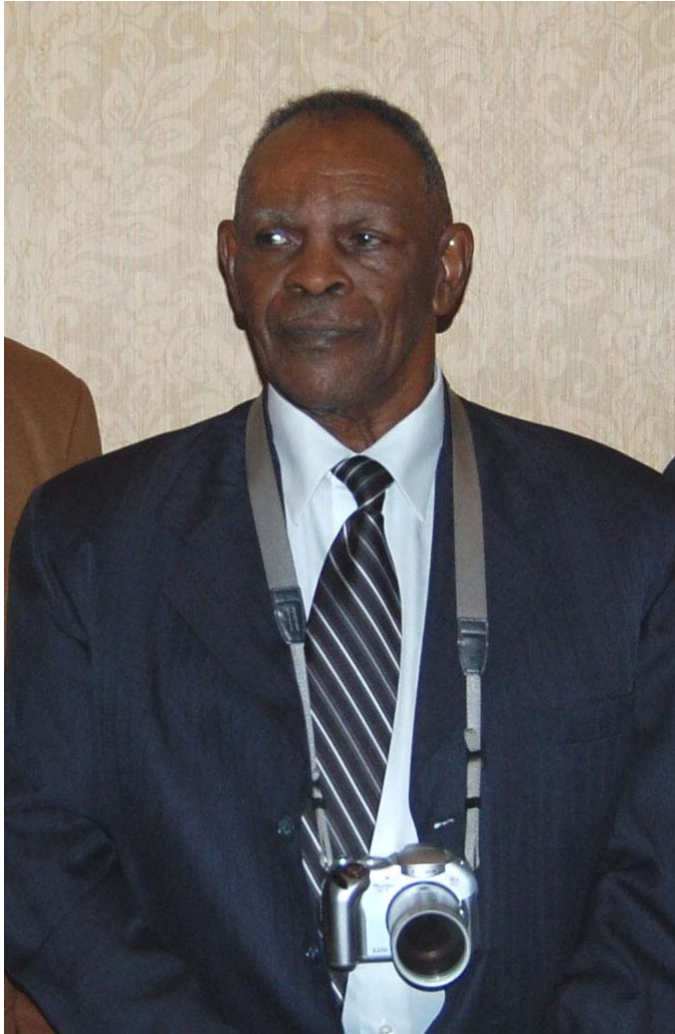
The AWRA Newsletter is an unofficial publication of the Air Weather Reconnaissance Association. Address questions and comments to Bernard Barris, the Editor, at the address listed above, or E-mail Bernie at: awra038@aol.com



WC-130B 62-3492. Delivered in 1962 as one of the very first C-130s in AWS, it is seen here in its Advanced Weather Reconnaissance System (AWRS) configuration (note the ARWO scanner bubble above the sampling foil) circa 1974. AWRS was one of three USAF initiatives that arose thanks to Congressional interest after Hurricane Camille struck in October 1969, and was only fielded on this one aircraft. AWRS continued in USAF service until 1979. AWRS served as proof-of-concept for the Improved Weather Reconnaissance System (IWRS) that was first contracted in 1983. IWRS was installed on all WC-130s in the 1980's and 90's. The WC-130J flown today by Hurricane Hunters has an extremely modern next generation reconnaissance capability that we hope to see during the 2014 reunion in Biloxi.

Official USAF Photo

Clarence "Chuck" Miller



On 30 Dec 2013, AWRA lost a true comrade. Clarence "Chuck" Miller passed away unexpectedly in Oklahoma City. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his widow, Carolyn, and the rest of the family.

Chuck was an extremely professional dropsonde operator for 16 years of his USAF Career. He flew on WB-50, WC-135, and the WC-130B/E/H while assigned to the 53rd, 54th, 55th, and 56th WRS; as well as the 9th WRW and Det 5, AWS. Otha Spencer wrote an article in the 1996 AWRA newsletter that chronicled Chuck's accomplishments during his career. I won't try and rehash that effort here. Suffice it to say, "He done good."

To those of us who attend the reunions, Chuck was a mainstay. From the very beginning of AWRA in 1992, Chuck was always there with a smile, a ready story, and the ever-present camera hanging from a strap around his neck. Whenever we were looking for a candid shot of some aspect of the reunion, we just knew that Chuck had it for us.

He was a good friend.

TAPS

Sadly, over the past year, AWRA has learned of the deaths of several more members of our weather reconnaissance family. May they Rest in Peace.

Jack Taylor	2001
Eileen Wallace	2006 Wife of Gene (D/14)
James Mattingly	2007
Peter LaSota	2010
Leon Barnett	2011
Marie Procter	2011 Wife of Robert (D/12)
Harriet Mattingly	2012 Wife of James (D/07)
Robert Procter	2012
John Staley	2012
Chuck Miller	2013
Gene Wallace	2014
Rick Wohlman	2014

Our lives are so much richer for having known them.

We will greatly miss them all



815th WRS (AFRES) Patch beginning 1976



Retired Air Force Col. Eugene "Gene" D. Wallace hoisting the flag at his Laguna Beach home with daughters Barbara Jensen, Fran Wallace and Linda Wallace.
 Photo by Jebb Harris, The Orange County Register

Gene Wallace

Colonel Eugene Dye Wallace, 94, passed away on 4 May 2014 at his home in Laguna Beach, CA, with his family by his side. Gene was one of our most regular AWRA reunion attendees until 2008, when declining health forced him to stop his annual journey to numerous veterans' events, including ours. It was a true honor to visit with him and hear his story first hand. Gene was usually accompanied to the reunions by one of his devoted daughters, Fran Wallace, Linda Wallace, or Barbara Jensen.

Gene was known to us for his time in weather reconnaissance. He flew both the WB-50 and the WB-47. From July 1960 until July 1963 he was the Commander of the 56th WRS at Yokota AB, Japan. This was a transitional time in weather reconnaissance history. There was a move to reduce the size of the military, and AWS was not immune. At one point, Gene's 56th WRS was the only weather reconnaissance squadron left in AWS. Squadrons in Alaska, Hawaii, Bermuda, and California had been discontinued and replaced by smaller detachments under the 9th WRG. Gene's command at Yokota included a detachment on Guam that replaced the 54th WRS.

Gene's time in weather reconnaissance, while important, was not his most notable memory from his 30 plus years on active duty. On Dec 7th, 1941, Lt Gene Wallace was in Southern California, training on the Martin B-26. Almost immediately, they received go-to-war orders and deployed to Australia to begin operations to strike back at the Japanese. On 24 May 1942, Gene was copilot on a B-26 that attacked the Japanese air base at Rabaul, New Britain. During a successful bomb run, his aircraft was hit by ground fire and lost one of their two

engines. Facing multiple emergencies, and knowing they could not make it back to their base, Gene's crew was forced to ditch on the south side of the island. Six of the eight-man crew escaped the sinking aircraft and made it to shore. All of the men were injured, Wallace included.

Over the next ten months, he experienced many harrowing events while evading the Japanese, recovering from his wounds, living among the native people, and traversing the mountainous spine of the island. On 25 March 1943, Gene, and the last two other survivors from their crew, were rescued by a daring night flight by an Australian Catalina flying boat. Gene once gave me a day-by-day recounting of the story, and has retold it numerous times to enthralled audiences.

The events were highlighted by Life Magazine in an 8-page article in the June 28, 1943 issue. I strongly recommend tracking down this article and reading Gene's amazing story. The issue can be read online (Google Books) at:

http://books.google.com/books?id=SE4EAAAAMBAJ&prints ec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Gene retired from the USAF in 1970 and began a 23-year second career as an elementary school teacher. Gene's daughters relate how many of his former students have let them know how much they appreciated the life lessons they learned from Gene.

Colonel Gene Wallace will be buried, with full military honors, at Arlington National Cemetery at 9:00 AM on Friday, 26 September 2014.

Welcome New Members

One more great result of holding the 2013 reunion at the home of the 55th WRS was the ability to reconnect with quite a few new members, twenty five, in fact.

New Life Members

Joe Buckwalter	55th	WC-135
Bruce Cathcart	54th 56th 58th	Numerous
Walter Conway	53rd 55th	WB-29
Jeff Falkner	58th	WC-130
Charlie Fleischer	53rd 55th 58th	WB-29
Ventura Franco	55th	WC-135
Elmer Green	59th 375th	RB-29
Roger Hagen	55th	WB-47 WC-135
Willis Hanson	53rd	WB-37 WC-130
Gale Haskins	54th	WC-130
Jack Henning	56th	WB-29 WB-50
Dale Holland	55th	WC-135
Ronald Hust	55th	WC-135
Dale Knuth	55th	WC-130 WC-135
Erich Linse	55th	WC-130 WC-135
Paul Meisner	53rd	WB-29 WB-50
Paul Morefield	55th	WB-47
Bob Nowack	55th	WC-135
Leslie Nowack	55th	WC-135
Bill Ostendorf	54th 55th 41RWRW	WC-130 WC-135
Bill Rahter	54th 55th 41RWRW	WC-130 WC-135
Warren Searls	55th	WB-47

New One-Year Members (Expires 1 Aug 2015)

Joseph Armstead	54th	WC-130A
-----------------	------	---------

We keep the most current version of the AWRA roster online in the Members-Only area of the AWRA web site. Go to:

<http://www.awra.us/roster/>

Log in credentials are required. If you have lost yours, or not previously asked for one, send a request to the web master at:

awra038@aol.com Subject: Members-Only Area Request

2014 AWRA Reunion Tentative Agenda

Wed, 17 Sep 2014

1300-1800	Registration in Lobby
1400-2200	Hospitality in the Hospitality Suite
1800-2200	Registration in the Hospitality Suite
All Day	Personal Activities

Thu, 18 Sep 2014

0900-2300	Hospitality/Registration in the Hospitality Suite
0945	(Optional) Depart Hotel for Beauvoir
1000	(Optional) Tour Beauvoir, Jefferson Davis Library, and tomb of the unknown Confederate Soldier.
All Day	Personal Activities

Fri, 19 Sep 2014

0800-2300	Hospitality in the Hospitality Suite
0930	Depart Hotel for Keesler AFB via POV
1000	Briefing and tour of 53rd WRS
1030-1200	Tour WC-130J on Flightline
TBD	Depart Keesler AFB
TBD	Arrive Hotel
1800	(Optional) Group Dinner Location/Cost TBD
All Day	Personal Activities

Sat, 20 Sep 2014

0800-1700	Hospitality in the Hospitality Suite
0900-1030	AWRA Board of Directors Meeting
1030-1200	AWRA General Membership Meeting
1800-1900	No-Host Social Hour
1845	Group Photos
1900-2200	Annual AWRA Banquet – Casual Dress Speaker: 53rd WRS

Sun, 21 Sep 2014

0800-1200	Departure Hospitality
-----------	-----------------------



Air Weather Reconnaissance Association

c/o Bernard C. Barris
11019 Oaktree Park
San Antonio, TX 78249-4440

Place
Postage
Here

IMPORTANT REUNION REMINDER!

The 2014 AWRA Reunion
will be held in Biloxi, MS
from 17 - 21 September 2014

PLEASE FILL OUT THE ENCLOSED
REGISTRATION FORM AND
MAIL IT IN TODAY!

Also, Call the Quality Inn Hotel and make your reservation!