



# Air Weather Reconnaissance Association

Volume 23 No. 1

June 2015



Wreckage of WB-50D t/n 48-098 lies on a hillside north of Yokota AB. Photo taken a few days after the crash that took the lives of 9 of 11 crewmen plus a Japanese national on the ground.

Photo by AWRA Member Richard Hall, All Rights Reserved

## ALWAYS REMEMBER ...

I hope everyone had a great Memorial Day this year. Down here in central Texas we had a very wet weekend, so wet in fact that my family was unable to make our traditional visit to the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery to honor those veterans who have served the country so proudly. We did however pause to remember the men and women who have died in the service of their country.

As always, we especially remember the Air Weather Service crews who died while conducting weather reconnaissance and atmospheric sampling missions.

This article will highlight one crew from the 56<sup>th</sup> Weather Reconnaissance Squadron at Yokota AB, Japan. On 28 Dec 1956, WB-50D 48-098 crashed North-Northwest of Yokota at the end of long weather track. The aircraft was identified to air traffic control by the name of the track it was flying, in this case Buzzard Golf. Nine of the 11 crewmen died at the crash site from trauma and the post-crash fire. Two men survived with life threatening, and life altering, burns. As far as I know,

this is also the only AWS recon accident where someone on the ground was killed. A Japanese national was killed in a building struck by debris from the WB-50 as it tore through a line of trees.

On the crew was:

Capt Leonard Klawa	Aircraft Commander
Capt Raymond Durr	Pilot
Capt Lawrence Monies	Navigator
1Lt Waylon Moseley	Navigator
Capt Dewey Keithly	Weather Observer
SSgt William Taylor	Flight Engineer
A2C Gerald Arnn	Crew Chief
A2C Thomas Mose	Radio Operator
A2C John Hollis	Radio Operator
A2C Gene Wright*	Dropsonde Operator
A2C Jim Turk*	Special Equipment Operator

\* Survived Crash

Continued on Page 7, See **REMEMBER**

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

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

Greetings from the Pres.

Well, it's that time of year again.

AWRA had a great time in Biloxi for our last reunion. We had a large turnout, with 90 plus in attendance. This year should be another great one as we "Go Back to Tucson". The last one we held in Tucson (in 2007) was a great success. Peter and Mary Copesky did a great job then, and from early indications this year could be even better! Don't miss out.

On a sad note we lost Ralph Ruyle, a founding member and a great person and friend. We all will miss him. RIP, Ralph, and smooth flying.

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 Tucson

Stoney

## See you in Tucson

As Stoney mentioned, we are heading to Tucson for the annual reunion of members. Once again, our reunion POC's have done a fantastic job getting us great group rates at the Hilton Hotel. This is a wonderful venue with views of the mountains all around. It is very near the base and the Pima Air and Space Museum that we will be visiting.

They are also setting up an official group tour of the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group aka "the Boneyard", as well as offering briefings at the 25 OWS.

The dates of the reunion are 21-25 October, which is fast approaching. Please mail in your registration right now while you are thinking about it. It is too easy to forget or lose the form if you wait. Also, call the Hilton and reserve your room today!

## Dig out your old flight suit

We have a suggestion from one of our members. Stan Sowa would like everyone to dig through your old boxes, A-3 bag, or wherever you put your flight gear, and grab a flight suit to bring to the reunion. Let's see who can still make it fit (mine doesn't ...)

As an alternative, bring your "Party Suit" that you had made in Korea, or Thailand, or wherever.

Stan promises a bottle of good XXX to the "winner". He didn't say how he would select one though ...



**Dig in that closet.** Let's see how many folks can bring their old flight suit to Tucson. Photo at right shows Stoney Faubus modeling his "Stanta Stoney" flight suit and jacket while on Guam in the early 1980's. Another option would be if you have a "party suit" from back in the day. At left is a gathering of senior AWS folks at Scott AFB when General Collens was commander of AWS. Standing, from left, are Berry Rowe, Bill Bilyeu, Mike Aldrich, John Meek, John Collens, and Art Livingston. Seated are Mortimer Bennett and Morris Newhouse. I see a variety of patches and logos, including a couple of the unofficial Motor Pool detachment patches from Udorn.

Photos courtesy of Stoney Faubus and John Collens All rights reserved

## Dr. Robert Simpson 1912 - 2014

Dr. Robert "Bob" Simpson, passed away 19 Dec 2014 at age 102. Dr. Simpson was one of the world's premier tropical storm researchers. His history with hurricanes and typhoons goes back to WWII, when, as an instructor at the USAAF meteorology school at Howard AAF, Canal Zone, he made a research flight into a hurricane south of Hispanola in 1945. After the war, Dr. Simpson's dedication drove him to make several "piggy-back" flights into hurricanes with the Hurricane Hunters of the 53rd/373rd Reconnaissance Squadron (VLR) Weather.

In Aug 1951, while assigned to the National Weather Bureau (NWB) in Honolulu, Bob Simpson flew his first typhoon penetration. This flight into Typhoon Marge was made in a WB-29 of the 54th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Medium, Weather. The aircraft commander that day was the late Ray Brashear, the squadron operations officer. Ray's description of the flight follows:

*"I scheduled myself for this flight before Typhoon Marge and Dr. Simpson came along. This was the first time he had actually been in a typhoon, although he had studied them for many years. He was all over the front of the airplane taking notes and photos at a furious rate. We normally descend to 1500 feet in the eye, but he wanted lower readings so I went down to 800 ft. He wanted pressure and temperature readings. This was against my better judgment, but he wanted the readings so badly that I agreed."*

*"We went from one side of the eye, across the center and to the far rim. Just as I was about to turn around, we hit terrific turbulence as the plane tried to roll to the right. I used full left rudder and aileron to try and turn to the left. With no luck I finally chopped the two left engines and we finally got back into the eye. Wright-Pat had sent a recording G meter since they assumed we would be a little harder on the B-29s than the average B-29 unit. Upon landing we checked the G meter readings and we had hit 5 "Gs " a couple of times, plus 3 negative "Gs" several times."*

Dr. Simpson also wrote about the flight in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society issue of Sep 1952.

Returning to the states, Dr. Simpson continued to make flights into hurricanes over the next few

years, including a flight into Hurricane Edna in 1954. This flight became famous worldwide due to the fact that Edward R. Murrow was aboard the WB-29 to make a recording for his "See It Now" television show. This exposure, along with the very busy, and damaging, 1954 hurricane season, moved Congress to increase funding to AWS and the NWB, including authorizing Dr. Simpson's National Hurricane Research Project (NHRP). Two TB-50A aircraft and a B-47B were modified for the project. AWS provided the B-50 crews and maintenance support. The WB-47B would later be assigned to the 55th WRS at McClellan.

In 1967, Simpson became Deputy Director of the National Hurricane Center. He served as Director of the NHC from 1968 to 1974. Working with his good friend Herb Saffir, he developed the **Saffir-Simpson** wind scale that is still used today to measure the intensity of hurricanes. The scale was first used in 1972.

Dr. Simpson continued his active interest in weather and weather modification even after he retired from federal service. He attended many annual hurricane conferences, and was honored by the attendees several times, including when he came in 2012 after reaching 100 years old. His autobiography, "Hurricane Pioneer" was just published and can be found at most online vendors, such as Amazon.



Bob Simpson (L) and Cecil Gentry at West Palm Beach, FL, Headquarters of the NHRP, 1956

## AWRA Officers

<b>President</b>	<b>Stoney Faubus</b> (See Directors List)
<b>Vice Presidents</b> (see note)	<b>Peter Copesky</b> (See Directors List)
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>William Burnette</b> (See Directors List)
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Bob Tuttle</b> 17118 Hideaway Ridge Rd Eagle River, AK 99577 (907) 694-4992
<b>Historian-Archivist</b>	<b>Bernard Barris</b> (See Directors List)
<b>Membership</b>	<b>Bernard Barris</b> (See Directors List)

Note: AWRA is looking for nominees to fill Officer and BoD positions. Contact any officer with your suggestions. Looking for individuals who can be available to serve and attend reunions.

## Board of Directors

Currently Vacant (*Chairman*)  
Pending the next Board of  
Directors meeting – Oct 2015

<b>Bernard Barris</b> 11019 Oaktree Park San Antonio, TX 78249 (210) 696-5072	<b>William Burnette</b> 1910 Crest Ridge Dr Papillion, NE 68133 (402) 502-3771
<b>Charley L. Cooper</b> 10837 St. Xavier Lane St. Ann, MO 63074 (314) 428-4379	<b>Peter Copesky</b> 4112 E Kilmer St Tucson, AZ 85711 (520) 514-8844
<b>Stoney Faubus</b> 1329 Hwy 395 N STE 10 – 242 Gardnerville NV 89410	<b>Pat Hanavan</b> 12402 Winding Branch San Antonio TX 78230 (210) 479-0226
<b>Arnold Jarvis</b> P.O. Box 776 Elephant Butte, NM 87935 (505) 744-5722	<b>John E. Lein</b> P.O. Box 41288 Charleston, SC 29423 (843) 522-5796

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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](mailto:awra038@aol.com)



One of the highlights of our last Tucson reunion was seeing aircraft that some members had flown. These included WB-57F, WC-135 and the WC-130, 64-0554, seen above. This aircraft has since finished her sad career as an aircraft battle damage repair training item and has been scrapped. A personalized tour, offered by Davis-Monthan to our members, will be a central part of the reunion agenda again this year. Even though 554 is gone, this will still be a great opportunity. We hope to see everyone there.

## Welcome New Members

### New Life Members

Norman Beauchamp	54th	WB-29 WB-50
JB Cobb	815th	WC-130
Richard Hafely	54th	WC-130
Tony Hlavac	53rd	WC-130
Richard K McNab	53rd 57th 9thWRW Det 2 41 RWRW	WB-47 WC-130
Forest Van Loon	55th	WB-47 WC-130
George Webster	54th	WB-29 WB-50

### New One-Year Members (Expires 1 Aug 2015/2016)

James Campbell	374th	B-29
Ron Koplitz	55th 54th	WC-130
James Rochette	55th	WB-50 WB-47 WB-57 WC-130 WC-135
John T Stinson	53rd	B-17
Clyde Wilson	59th 9th WRG Hq AWS	WB-50
Roger Winn	54th 56th	WB-50

AWRA doesn't mail renewal reminders to our annual members. It is incumbent on the member to send in their annual dues, or upgrade to Life Membership. For those new annual members who want to become Life Members, please send \$25 to the membership chairman. This is the difference between the Life Member and Annual dues. Send to:

Bernard C Barris, AWRA Membership Chairman  
11019 Oaktree Park  
San Antonio TX 78249

### Membership Roster

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

If you do not have access to the Internet, please contact the Membership Chairman for a hard copy roster.

## 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.

Stu Dorn	2009	
GT Littleton	2009	
Fellie Robinson	2010	
Germanus "Jack" France	2011	
Kenneth Kross	2011	
Nelson Peterson	2011	
Wally Ahlborn	2012	
John Dorger	2012	
Barbara Masterson	2012	Wife of Fred
Carol Merrill	2012	Wife of William (D/00)
Glenn (Tom) Mull	2012	
Charles Payne	2012	
Reginald Shinn	2012	
Robert Baltzer	2013	
Betty Brim	2013	Wife of Aubrey
James Carlow	2013	
Alvin Funderburg	2013	
Barbara Smith	2013	Wife of Donald
Fred Towles	2013	
William Adams	2014	
Patricia Carleton	2014	Wife of Hank
Elsie Chesley	2014	Wife of Donald (D/98)
Donald Cokely	2014	
Robert Cotten	2014	
Lois Greshel	2014	Wife of James
Sue Kosick	2014	Wife of John (D/08)
Retta Lavoie	2014	Wife of Chuck
Gordon Macek	2014	
Joseph Manos	2014	
Charles Markham	2014	
Ralph Ruyle	2014	
Ginny Arnault	2015	Wife of Warren
Rich Chapple	2015	

Our lives are so much richer for having known them.

We will greatly miss them all .....

The families of all of these men and women are in our thoughts and prayers.



Ralph Ruyle was a fixture at our annual reunions. The photo on the right side shows Ralph with John Pavone and Bernie Barris in San Antonio during the 2009 reunion. During the banquet that year, Ralph was honored for his long-time service to AWRA with an achievement plaque. Ralph often traveled to the later reunions with a special driving buddy. Photo at left shows Ralph with his friend in the hospitality suite at the 2012 reunion in Omaha, NE.

Photos by courtesy of Bernie Barris and Charles Hart, all rights reserved

## Ralph Richmond Ruyle, Jr.

On 12 December 2014, AWRA lost a great friend. Lt Col Ralph Richmond Ruyle, Jr, USAF (Retired) passed away at age 91. Ralph was one of the founders of AWRA and served the association for over 20 years in various capacities. At the time of his death, Ralph was the Chairman of the Board of Directors. He had previously served on the Board, as well as being the Association Treasurer, and Membership Chairman.

Ralph graduated from UCLA with degrees in meteorology and mathematics. During his Air Force career he served as both a pilot and meteorologist. He spent several years in the 18th Weather Sq and then, in 1954, went to Hq AWS Scientific Services.

Anyone who had the chance to talk to him about his career was enthralled by his stories. He told of several harrowing trips flying some of the most senior AWS folks from one stateside location to another.

From 1957 to 1960, Ralph was a WB-50 aircraft commander, and later chief pilot, at the 54th WRS on Guam. During Ralph's time on Guam, the 54th lost a WB-50 flying into Typhoon Ophelia. At our 2007 reunion Ralph sat for hours with the family of this crew's copilot explaining the extended search

efforts conducted looking for the missing aircraft and crew.

Like many of us assigned there, Ralph thought that his time on Guam was the best of his career.

Leaving Guam, he was the advanced weather officer at Eglin and checked out in the T-33, as well as the B-47, and B-57. In 1965, Ralph went to a weather squadron in Viet Nam and got to fly several US Army VIP aircraft while working ground support. After Viet Nam, he flew photo mapping (C-130A) and then finally was assigned to fly the C-141, which he called the "Cadillac" of airlifters.

In retirement Ralph continued to stay engaged. He taught math to college students in NW Florida and was a deacon and elder at his church. He was very proud of his membership in MENSA. Talking to Ralph, you soon discovered that his interests spanned an amazing range, including all aspects of weather, history, and life in general.

Ralph is survived by Libby, his wife of 58 years. This special couple hosted numerous AWRA reunions in Ft Walton Beach, each one better than the last. He will be greatly missed.

Often, my focus is drawn by contact from a surviving family member of one of the crew. Recently, I was contacted by Carlton Dickerson, whose uncle, SSgt William A. "Abe" Taylor, was the flight engineer on the ill-fated flight. Carlton has actively sought to flesh out the story of his Uncle Abe. I was generally aware of this accident from our list of fatal crashes and stories from our members. Richard Hall was a Dropsonde Operator (Drop) at the 56<sup>th</sup> at the time. He was good friends with Gene Wright, the Drop on the flight who was one of the two survivors. Richard shared the photo on Page 1, that he took within days of the crash. Richard and Gene had been in the same dropsonde class at Chanute AFB before being assigned to Japan. Carlton contacted the USAF Safety Office to obtain a copy of the official accident report. This report, while redacted and copied from poor quality microfilm records, does tell us what happened.

To the story, the Buzzard Golf took off early in the morning, Japan time. Buzzard was the nickname for tracks originating from the 56<sup>th</sup>. The Golf track went North and East of Japan, designed to maximize the range capability of the new WB-50, and cross the potential path of any radioactive debris exiting the Soviet Union after a nuclear test. The bulk of the track was flown at 500 millibars. From all indications the track that day was flown without any problem and all horizontal and vertical (dropsonde) observation data had been successfully relayed to the 56<sup>th</sup> Monitor.

Thirteen hours and 12 minutes after takeoff, Buzzard Golf (BG) made contact with Terminal Control (TC), asking for clearance into Yokota AB. We know the exact communications between TC and BG from the transcript in the accident report. Unfortunately, the recording of GCA was unreadable and the accident investigation team only had the memory and testimony of the scope operator to go on. On initial contact, TC informed BG that Yokota AB was currently recovering from a routine barrier engagement by a fighter aircraft. BG was instructed to hold at the Tachikawa radio range, awaiting clearance for the approach. After about 35 minutes in the holding pattern, BG was told to contact Yokota GCA.

Six minutes later, two things are on the TC transcript. First TC is calling BG with no reply. At the same time, a pair of F-86 fighters on TC frequency mention seeing a big fire flare. Olympic 31 and 34 are inbound at 30,000 ft altitude. After some more communication, Olympic 34 is cleared to descend over the fire and report. Olympic 34 heads down to about 2,000 ft above the fire and tells TC that, "I think that's your boy, I'm afraid." The F-86 pilot provided bearings to assist TC in directing rescue forces to the scene.

It took some time for the 36<sup>th</sup> Air Rescue Squadron at Johnson AB to launch a H-19 and get to the crash site.

The area near the crash was sparsely populated farmland on a steep hillside, just below the ridgeline. The WB-50 had first hit a line of trees, sheering them off and shedding pieces of aircraft as it went. It then plowed into the hillside, exploding into flames. Debris from the WB-50 hit a farm building, killing one man who was inside. Varying reports say several of the crew were able to escape the wreckage, but all the survivors were caught up in the inferno as burning aviation fuel rushed from ruptured tanks and headed downhill. A few locals rushed to the scene and tried to pull crew members to safety. Two badly burned men were alive, the Drop and the SEO. They had been sitting in the scanner blisters, and, exiting out the blisters, moved across the slope away from the aircraft. The rescue copilot and para-medic (according to Stars and Stripes reporting) loaded the two men onto the helicopter and then flew them to the Johnson AB Hospital.

What happened? As noted earlier, the accident report conclusions were based on the GCA scope operator's testimony, because the communications recording was unreadable. GCA made contact with BG as they departed the Tachikawa range holding pattern northbound. They were descending to 4000'. GCA soon turned BG to heading of 270°. The GCA operator testified that he intended to turn BG to 225° to intercept the final approach course to Yokota AB. The controller decided that BG was too high to make a direct approach from their location. He told BG to make a 270° right turn and to descend to 2,000 feet. BG acknowledged the instructions and began the right turn. It seems that BG was farther west than the GCA controller realized, or that he did not have good situational awareness of the terrain that would now be in front of BG. The controller testified that he saw BG in the right turn for 30 seconds to one minute, and that they had reached a heading of about 045° when they disappeared from his radar.

Ken Gunderson, another 56th Drop, remembers being told by Gene Wright that, just prior to feeling the first impact, Capt Keithly in the nose of the WB-50 had seen the trees ahead and yelled "Pull up!". Gunderson says that the crew had applied power, and started to pull the nose up, but by this time it was too late.

The accident report places primary blame for the accident squarely on the shoulders of the GCA scope operator.

A contributing factor was GCA Squadron commander allowing this individual to operate unsupervised when he had had previous issues. The crew was cited for not having good situational awareness of a safe altitude vs their position. Crew fatigue was also mentioned as a potential factor. Bottom line, this was an accident that should not have happened.



**Air Weather Reconnaissance Association**

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

Place  
Postage  
Here

***IMPORTANT REUNION REMINDER!***

The 2015 AWRA Reunion  
will be held in Tucson, AZ  
from 21 - 25 October 2015

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

Also, call the Hilton Tucson East and make your reservation!