



# Depot Fallout

AFTAC Alumni Association - West Coast Chapter  
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**LOOK US UP AT**  
**[www.AFTACWCC.org](http://www.AFTACWCC.org)**

## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Dave Tarquino, WCC President

Our Fall Social will be on 8 November at the China Buffet (see article below). Please join us for a good time and bring a friend. We will have an election at the Social to fill the vacant Director at Large board position. If you are interested, contact a board member.

Our business meetings and social events are open to the entire AFTAC family. Put the dates on your calendar and join us if you can. Our next business meeting is 8 December at 7:00 PM at the Lions Gate Hotel, at McClellan Park.

## INTO THE MUSHROOM CLOUD

Excerpted from an article By Mark Wolverton  
Air & Space Magazine



**Air Force personnel decontaminate a B-29 sampler aircraft with Gunk degreaser. (Courtesy National Nuclear Security Administration / Nevada Site Office)**

He wasn't supposed to do it, but on May 15, 1948, Lieutenant Colonel Paul H. Fackler, commanding officer of the U.S. Air Force 514th Reconnaissance Squadron Weather, flew his airplane into the seething mushroom cloud of an atomic bomb detonation

As part of Zebra, the final shot of America's second series of atomic tests at Enewetak atoll in the Pacific, Fackler had the job of tracking the atomic cloud from at least 10 miles away, hoping that special filters attached to the airplane would catch samples of the radioactive debris. But as he pulled away from the enormous roiling cloud in a climbing turn to the left, Fackler suddenly found his weather reconnaissance Boeing WB-29 inside a small finger-like projection of the main cloud.

"No one keeled over dead, and no one got sick," Fackler reported later, according to History of Air Force Atomic Cloud Sampling, a government document published in January 1963. He promptly left the cloud and continued his normal flight profile until his radiation safety officer, sitting in the B-29's nose monitoring radiation levels, announced the crew had reached their exposure limit: 100 milliroentgens, the amount a person receives annually from naturally occurring radiation from the sun and the soil. It was time to break off and head home to the air base on Kwajalein, in the Marshall Islands.

Fackler flew through a few rainshowers to wash off radioactive particles.

Aside from the unstated objective of geopolitical saber-rattling, the main purpose of atomic bomb tests was to try out new weapon designs and improve existing bombs. Analyzing the tiny particles of fallout, trace elements, and short-lived radioisotopes unleashed by the nuclear reactions was the only way to get definitive data on just what had happened inside the multi-million-degree heart of an atomic explosion. But collecting that debris in the aftermath of the explosion was a challenge.

During the first postwar test series, Operation Crossroads in 1946, specially trained pilots in mothership aircraft guided unmanned drones through clouds of two consecutive explosions from a safe distance. The drones, retired Boeing B-17 bombers and Grumman F6F fighters, had boxes mounted on the fuselage or wings, lined with filter paper designed to catch radioactive particles.

Controlling the drones was tricky even under the best conditions, much less in the turbulence following a nuclear blast. Drones often crashed or went astray, and even when everything worked properly, they couldn't always collect the high-quality samples craved by the physicists and radio-chemists at Los Alamos labs in New Mexico and Lawrence Livermore laboratory in California. All a controller could do was point his drone at the cloud and send it through blindly, hoping that by sheer luck the drone would catch a good sample and survive the landing.

But Fackler's stunt—whether purposeful or accidental, no one ever knew for sure—had raised an intriguing prospect. By the time the United States began the Ranger series of atomic tests at the new Nevada test site in 1951, Fackler and some supportive colleagues had convinced the military and the Atomic Energy Commission to try manned sampling flights. Monitoring aircraft could vector manned aircraft into the parts of a cloud most likely to yield good samples, and manned craft could respond to rapidly changing conditions much faster than a remote-controlled craft.

The second atomic bomb to detonate in the United States was triggered at 5:45 a.m. on January 27, 1951 (Trinity, the first, exploded near Alamogordo, New Mexico, on July 16, 1945), and at the time, Fackler was piloting a WB-29 toward the mushroom cloud. He depressurized the aircraft cabin and the crew went on 100 percent oxygen to avoid inhaling radioactive dust. Then Fackler took the aircraft through the cloud. He made a second pass, and then the radiation safety officer told him they were nearing their milliroentgen limit—the mission was over. Another sampling aircraft followed Fackler's through each of Operation Ranger's four remaining atomic blasts.

The flights were pronounced a success, and what had begun as a simple pilot error, then explored as a cautious experiment, became a vital element of America's nuclear weapons program. The sampling flights continued through further tests in Nevada, with the teams perfecting techniques and equipment, while Fackler pushed to establish a dedicated cloud sampling unit.

## **OPERATION IVY**

*by Don King, WCC Newsletter Editor*

On 31 January 1950 Pres. Harry S. Truman publicly declared the U.S. intention to develop a hydrogen bomb. The primary motivations for this declaration were two surprising revelations - the Soviet Union's first fission bomb during the previous fall; and the discovery of Klaus Fuchs' espionage activity at Los Alamos, uncovered just days before. These combined shocks, added to the rapidly growing Cold War tensions, created grave concern at the highest levels of Washington about the United States being overtaken in a nuclear arms race by the Soviet Union.

From that time onward, the highest priority was placed on developing new and more potent strategic weapons - especially thermonuclear weapons (hydrogen bombs). At that time though no one had good ideas about how a practical thermonuclear weapon could be made, rendering Truman's declaration hollow. This raised new fears - that Truman's pronouncement may have spurred Soviet thermonuclear efforts onward even faster, and that they might have hit upon concepts not yet known in the U.S. Consequently a fallback strategy was pursued - developing the highest yield fission bomb possible, a technical effort led by Theodore Taylor at Los Alamos. The conceptual breakthroughs of Stanislaw Ulam and Edward Teller the following January provided the needed insights to develop a thermonuclear device.

So from early 1951 onward, these two parallel efforts to develop high yield weapons were focused on a Pacific Proving Ground test series for late in 1952. This series - Operation Ivy - exploded the two largest bombs tested up to that time. It

inaugurated the thermonuclear age with the first "true" thermonuclear test (code name Mike), which was considerably more powerful than all the high explosives used in two World Wars put together. Ivy also tested the highest yield pure fission weapon ever exploded.

**“It is part of my responsibility as Commander in Chief of the Armed forces to see to it that our country is able to defend itself against any possible aggressor. Accordingly, I have directed the AEC to continue its work on all forms of atomic weapons, including the so-called hydrogen or *Super* bomb.”**

*President Harry S. Truman, 31 January 1950*



## **IVY MIKE**

As Operation Ivy started in late 1952, the sampling flights had largely transitioned from relatively slow prop-driven aircraft to jets, whose greater speed gave crews less time to hang around in the cloud. They could also quickly reach higher altitudes, an important consideration for testing H-bomb detonations, which produce much wider and taller clouds.

When the world's first hydrogen weapon, in a test designated "Mike," wiped out the Marshallese island of Elugelab on November 1, 1952, four F-84G fighters carrying sample collection equipment on their wingtips were already in the air. Designated Red Flight and led by Lieutenant Colonel Virgil Meroney, the jets arrived in the area of the bomb cloud about an hour and a half after detonation. Under instructions from the Convair B-36 sampler control aircraft circling some distance away, Meroney and his wingman penetrated the mushroom cloud's stem at about 40,000 feet. (As predicted, the main cloud, which began forming at about 55,000 feet, was too high for an aircraft to reach. Samples from the stem would have to do.) Immersed in the dull red glow of the cloud interior, Meroney watched all his radiation instruments peg to their maximum readings. After about five minutes inside, he and his wingman executed a 90-degree turn and escaped.

Then came the rest of Red Flight: Red 3 with Captain Bob Hagan, and his wingman, Red 4, Captain Jimmy Robinson. Hagan calls the cloud "dark and boiling."

To be continued next issue.

## **ISR AGENCY BECOMES PART OF NEW 25TH AIR FORCE**

The Air Force Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Agency is being realigned from Headquarters Air Force as a Field Operating Agency to become part of the new operational 25th Air Force, or NAF, under Air Combat Command, or ACC.

# WEBSITE ACTIVITY REPORT

## “www.AFTACWCC.org”

### Website Activity Report for the period 1 Jul 2014 – 30 Sep 2014

Submitted 01-Oct-2014 by Bob Fitzgerald, WCC Webmaster

<u>Month</u>	<u>Unique Visits</u>	<u>Highest Visit Day(#Visits)</u>	<u>Mo. Average Visits/Day</u>	<u>Most Popular* Page (#Visits)</u>	<u>Next Most Popular* Page</u>
Jul 2014	<b>6,722</b>	07/23 (383)	217	Albums** (2,082)	Departed (240)
Aug 2014	<b>6,699</b>	08/07 (363)	216	Departed (289)	Albums** (281)
Sep 2014	<b>6,644</b>	09/17 (448)	221	Departed (229)	Links (158)

Notes: \* “Most Popular” page does not include our ‘Home’ page, which almost always is the most popular page.

\*\* The most popular page in July & second most popular in August was the **May 2014 Spring Picnic** photo page.

I am pleased to see that you are consistently making good use of access to your favorite organizations via our “Links” page. **Would you like to see your favorite organization linked from that page?** If so, contact me with the URL. Your Webmaster, [Webmaster@AFTACWCC.org](mailto:Webmaster@AFTACWCC.org), is always open to suggestions for content, new page designs, & any help offered. Thanks, *bf*

## WHO SAID THAT?

*by Dale Klug, Editor Emeritus*

- >> Difficulty is a miracle in its first stage.
- >> For two people in a marriage to live together day after day is unquestionably the one miracle the Vatican has overlooked.
- >> Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?
- >> Self-sacrifice is the real miracle out of which all the reported miracles grow.
- >> Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I should have cherished every moment and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.

**Do you think you know who the above quotes came from? Send your best guess to: [dkconsulting@juno.com](mailto:dkconsulting@juno.com)**  
July 2014's quotes were from Charles Schultz, Pete Seeger, Plutarch, Sydney J Harris and B F Skinner. I only received one response; it was from **Bob Baker**.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

*by Dave Price, Membership Chairman*

**As of 9 Sep 2014**

**Total Active Members = 147    Life Members = 136**

**Annual membership fee of \$10 is due by 01 Jan** each year. Check your mailing label, or check the “WCC Roster” from our website “Forms” page. **Life memberships are available for \$75.** You can use the "Membership Application/Roster Update" form on the last page of this newsletter or the one from our web site “Forms” page to send with your dues. Don't let your membership lapse. **Those alumni who are not current with their membership dues will be dropped from the “active” roster along with our newsletter distribution & email notification lists.** (See our web site “Forms” page, “WCC Roster” link to check your status.)

## MEMORY TIME

*. by Joe Johnson, Vice President*

This is a special note for old time B types (early 1950s) and others that may have known or worked for Dr. Carl Romney. I noted in his obituary that he had written 3 books. I have read 2 of them (Recollections and Detecting the Bomb). I am sure many would enjoy the read as much as I did.

## **IN MEMORIAM**

*by Dale Klug, Editor Emeritus*



### **MSgt Kermit Gerald “Jerry” Wampole, USAF, Retired**

Jerry was born June 8, 1943 in York PA to Kermit and Emma Wampole and departed this life September 22, 2014 in Roseville CA. Raised in Windsor, PA; he graduated from Red Lion High School.

Jerry joined the US Air Force shortly after high school, where he worked in electronics as a Systems Repair Technician. He traveled around the world and enjoyed living overseas. Some of the favorite places he lived were in Australia, Thailand and Turkey.

In Turkey, Jerry met his true love, Mutlu, and they were wed there in Ankara, August 10, 1979. Jerry moved to McClellan AFB CA in 1983 and retired in 1987, serving 26 years in the Air Force.

Jerry then began his career with the State of California, Department of Conservation, where he worked as a Seismological Instrument Technician and later with Geographic Information System Maps. Jerry retired after 20 years with the department.

2014 was a difficult time for Jerry and his health deteriorated rapidly over the past few months. He survived lung cancer, but the COPD and damage from radiation therapy proved to be too much and Jerry passed at 71 years of age. He is survived by his wife Susan Mutlu Wampole; children Diane Wampole and Asli Kaptan-Roberts; and grandchildren Ciarra & Alexis Roberts and Emma L Wampole. Jerry enjoyed world history and keeping up to date on world news and events. Jerry loved his sports car and Harley motorcycles, vacationing in Hawaii and home improvement projects. Jerry was a good man; loving husband, father and grandfather. We will miss him dearly.

A funeral service was held October 3rd, at East Lawn Mortuary Chapel, 5757 Greenback Lane, Sacramento CA with Pastor Tom Norvell officiating. A private interment will be held at Sacramento Valley National Cemetery, Dixon CA. **MSgt Wampole was assigned to the Technical Operations Division at the time of his Air Force retirement in 1987. You may view/sign the Guestbook at:** [http://www.eastlawn.com/obituaries-services.html?obituary\\_id=1040005](http://www.eastlawn.com/obituaries-services.html?obituary_id=1040005)

## **EVENTS CALENDAR**

Just a reminder that our business meetings are held the **2<sup>nd</sup> Monday** of March, June, September, and December at 7:00 PM at the Lionsgate Hotel on McClellan Park. The meetings last about an hour and all Alumni are welcome.

*(Always check our ‘Events’ page at [www.AFTACWCC.org](http://www.AFTACWCC.org) or call ahead to our President to confirm time & place.)*

### **WWR 2015 UPDATE:**

The Florida Alumni Chapter planning committees are making excellent progress on the details for the next Air Force Technical Applications Center’s World Wide Alumni Reunion scheduled for 29, 30, and 31 May 2015 (WWR 2015) at the DoubleTree by Hilton Cocoa Beach Oceanfront. The registration committee members are hard at work preparing the registration web page soon to be announced.

# AFTAC ALUMNI ASSOC. – WEST COAST CHAPTER

## Fall Social

Saturday, 8 November 2014 – 11:30 - ~ 2:30PM

at the China Buffet in the Banquet Room

5623 Sunrise Blvd, Citrus Heights, Ca 95610 (916) 961-6888

COST: \$13.00/person

Our Fall Social will be at the China Buffet, 5623 Sunrise Blvd, Citrus Heights, Ca. Cost will be \$13.00 per person and includes the buffet with coffee, tea or soda. Beer & wine is available if you wish to purchase separately. Dress is casual. Join us for lunch on November 8<sup>th</sup> and bring your stories and a friend to kick off the Holiday Season. Please fill out the form below, or the one from our website “Forms” page, and your reminder portion, and then mail the form and your check to us by November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Questions? Email Dave Tarquino, [President@AFTACWCC.org](mailto:President@AFTACWCC.org), or call 916-723-7634.

**Keep this part as your reminder of what was on your registration form:**

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

My Check # \_\_\_\_\_ for \$ \_\_\_\_\_. was made out to “AFTAC-WCC”  
and I mailed the registration form on \_\_\_/\_\_\_/2014 to:

AFTAC Alumni Assoc.-WCC, P.O. Box 3974, Citrus Heights, CA 95611-3974

[Save the above for your file]

*(Cut off here, fill out & mail the following form with your check by 3 November 2014.)*

AFTAC Alumni Assoc. - West Coast Chapter

### Fall Social Registration Sign-up Form

Saturday, 8 November 2014 - 11:30 - ~ 2:30pm

China Buffet Restaurant Banquet Room

5623 Sunrise Blvd, Citrus Heights, CA 95610

*(Please Print Clearly)*

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Total # Meals:** \_\_\_\_ x \$13.00 each = \$\_\_\_\_.

**Make your check payable to “AFTAC-WCC” and mail it before 3 Nov 2014 along with this form to:**

AFTAC-WCC, P.O. Box 3974, Citrus Heights, CA 95611-3974



# AFTAC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION WEST COAST CHAPTER

P.O. Box 3974, Citrus Heights, CA 95611-3974  
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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / ROSTER UPDATE

Annual membership fee of \$10.<sup>00</sup> is due by 01 January each year. Check your mailing label for expiration date. Your last newsletter will be the one following your expiration date. Life memberships are available for \$75.<sup>00</sup>.

**PLEASE PRINT**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Last, First MI Last Rank Held Nickname Name of Spouse*

Addr: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Street, Apt #, etc. City State Zip Code*

( ) - \_\_\_\_\_  
*Home Phone Work Phone Email Addr*

Active Duty: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Branch of Service From: mm/yyyy - To: mm/yyyy Branch of Service From: mm/yyyy - To: mm/yyyy*

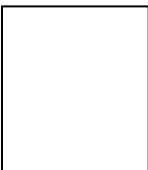
AFTAC Dates: \_\_\_\_\_  
*From: mm/yyyy - To: mm/yyyy From: mm/yyyy - To: mm/yyyy From: mm/yyyy - To: mm/yyyy*

**Support Your West Coast Chapter: Please pass a copy of this form to your AFTAC Alumni friends.** *[From the Depot Fallout]*

CHECK OUR WEBSITE AT [www.AFTACWCC.org](http://www.AFTACWCC.org) FOR THE LATEST WCC NEWS & PHOTOS



== FIRST CLASS MAIL ==



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