

556 SMS ASSOCIATION DECEMBER 2002 NEWSLETTER

Greetings to everyone. Hope everyone has a blessed Christmas and a Great new year.

This of course is our after reunion news letter. For all those who were unable to make it we had a great time meeting with the AAFM Group and picking up a new member or two. We had some great weather if you don't mind not having sun for a day or two. It did come out nicely on the day we left Santa Maria. So as usual here is the summary of the reunion.

Although most of us arrived on Wednesday the 23 of October, some had arrived the day before. Registration took place in the Veranda (I guess that's what it was called). The total for the AAFM was about 210 people. Among those was our 18 members along with spouses and friends. Col Simpson did a great job of organizing the registration and everything went smoothly when you checked in. As a momento, each person registered got a flash light (allegedly shaped like a missile) and a license plate frame with "Association of Air Force Missileers, Victors in the Cold War" printed on it. Most of the evening was spent in the hospitality room greeting others as they arrived and partaking of the snack buffet. Warm greeting were expressed to some first timers. As I recall they were Ron Zigli, Jim Burba (a big shot with AAFM but a little shot with us) Just kidding of course, it was great talking with Jim. Also attending for the first time were Don Huelle, and Dick Somerset. If I have left anyone out or someone has attended other reunions my humble apologies. Remember, I did turn 60 last month so I can now use age as an excuse.

The next day, Thursday was the tour of Vandenberg AFB facilities. As a former maintenance Airman, I enjoyed seeing the training facilities where the technicians were in training. WE also toured the launch training area where I got to launch a missile on the trainer. The tour was an all day affair concluding Dinner on the base.

Friday was one of those choice days. For those who like to hit a little ball and chase after it again until you can make it fall in a hole and do it again for 18 times there was golf at Vandenberg's Marshalia Ranch Golf Course. For the rest of us there was the tour of the Hearst Castle. This also was an all day affair with lunch included. If you haven't done this tour next time you are in the area it should be on your list of things to do. It is really something to see. For those who had reservations there was dinner at the Far Western in Guadalupe. Since Edie and I decided to make that a night for us to do our own thing we did not go. We went to a local eatery and had a great meal and spent the evening relaxing.

Saturday was a time for meetings and the banquet. The AAFM general meeting was held at 0930 and their Board at 1100. Some of us who are members attended the AAFM meeting. We then had our regular meeting at 1100 in our own room. Minutes are enclosed long with the financial report.

The banquet was another great evening that included a recognition of missileers' involvement in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. We also had a talk by General Lance Lord, commander of AF Space Command. For those of you who don't remember, a "General" is a four star general. That out ranks a three star, which out ranks a two star which out ranks a one star. Of course, those of us of the 556 know no one out ranks our own Col Beck.

Sunday we all arose and bid farewell to those we ran into with plans to see them next reunion. Special thanks to Col Simpson for allowing us to join them in Santa Maria.

And now for the local news. While we had a fairly good turnout, we thought more would be attending since we were on the west coast for the first time. If you have never been to a reunion you are missing a good time.

I have been made aware of the passing of three of our members. They are Harold Hartman, Walter Karcher, and Mike Kennedy. If you know of any others let me know.

If you haven't read the minutes of the business meeting yet we have agreed to hold the next reunion in San Antonio. We hope to have a good attendance including Col Beck and Col Kretzschmar. We have missed you both the last two reunions.

Please check the enclosed mailing list. If you see any errors let me know so I can correct it. If you think I have your email address but haven't sent you anything lately, it means I don't have it, or at least the correct one. So send it to me. Also, any other new you may have let me know and I will put in our next new letter.

Bruce Raleigh
Corresponding Secretary