

ROADRUNNERS INTERNATIONALE



1 April 2011 Newsletter 53d Edition

FINAL FLIGHT

8 March 2011 - Lt. Col. Ralph William "Bill" Thomas, Meteorologist at Groom Lake and Kadena Details posted at: <http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/thomas.html>



Sunol Glen students make history come alive By Alyson Whitaker

Second and third graders of Sunol Glen School culminated a month long biography unit by performing in their very own "Wax Museum" on March 10. The theme for the evening was "Americans who made a difference". Each student selected an individual from American history who they felt made a significant contribution to American society. Individuals represented spanned time from Pocahontas through current extreme motocross superstar Travis Pestrana, and dozens in between. While some students chose well-known historical icons, others selected less-familiar individuals connected by a personal experience or

relationship. Josh Replege, a third grader, chose his grandfather, Marty Knutson, a fighter pilot in the U.S. Air Force as his biographical figure. More about former U-2 pilot Marty Knutson posted at:

<http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/knutson.html>



National Geographic has given us a heads up that the documentary "Area 51 Declassified" featuring some of our Roadrunners will air on the National Geographic Channel on Sunday, May 22 at 10pm EST/PST. We will post a more formal announcement in the next newsletter. While the documentary will contain interviews with a limited number of our members, the rest can count on the documentary sparking media interest for interviews of all Groom Lake veterans. On this note, remember that you can discuss only the declassified project activities. Simply put – you can talk about your declassified project, but not details about the facility that might remain classified today. If you don't know if something is

declassified, politely decline talking about it until you know you can without violating your security oaths. We don't reveal secrets – we educate and supplement our record for the sake of oral history matters known only to you and others who had a need to know at the time.

Reunion update by Harry Martin. Thank you, Roadrunners for your responses to our call for yea or nay on your attending the reunion in October. Thus far, a little over 100 members and guests have expressed intent to attend. In July we finalize contracts with the hotel, so obviously we need an idea on attendance by then. A registration form is available on the



website for your registration. The menu is also posted on the website. As we solidify the details, we will update the reunion webpage. We are working with Lockheed and others for some recognition and contributions to our reunion. We have received a mix of desired activities from the members planning to attend. Some want a low stress activity while some want to go all out. Keep those suggestions coming so we can do our best to make everyone happy. Several of our members have indicated a desire to bring guests. Since the CIA declassified us, we, the committee, welcome our members bringing family and friends. Just let us know who and how many. Speaking of CIA, barring unforeseen circumstances, Mark and Cheryl are planning to have the CIA EAA store set up in the Command Post as they have the last two reunions.

OPTIONS BEING CONSIDERED FOR REUNION ACTIVITIES

We are seeking input on what our attendees wish to do. In May we will make a final effort to seek input from our members and finalize the options at the same time we finalize everything with the hotel in July. If you have a preference or suggestion, please contact the Reunion Committee Chairman, Harry Martin: hamandmgm@cox.net



Option 1 - A road trip by private vehicles to Rachel, Nevada where the members can enjoy an Alien Burger at the A'Le'Inn, replenish your supply of alien needs freshly shipped from your planet, and meet the local Earthlings. Recommended dress attire is comfortable and casual. <http://www.littlealeinn.com/>



Option 2 - A lunch cruise on Lake Mead. Our choice will be either a noon cruise or one at 1400 hours. Cost is \$24 per person/\$18.25 for a group of 25 or more. Again, we will plan on private transportation. <http://www.lakemeadcruises.com/>

Option 3 - A visit to Nellis AFB to include the Petting Zoo (Threat Museum), Thunderbird Museum, and lunch at the Officers Club or the food court at the BX. Again, this will be by private transportation and everyone pay for your own meal. <http://www.nellis.af.mil/index.asp>

Option 4 - Visit the Atomic Testing Museum. They invited us back, but we have not organized anything yet until we get a feel for the interests of our members. <http://www.atomictestingmuseum.org/index.asp>

For those who have not visited the website of late, the input of new material from our members has been great. Please realize that we and the Roadrunners authoring these Cold War oral history stories appreciate input, corrections, and additional stories to supplement these tidbits of untold history. Think of this in terms of what Jonna Doolittle Hoppes said in her "Jimmy Doolittle Raid" presentation at Historic Flight Foundation. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgt8PMoRGG8&featur> No one person deserves all the credit – credit goes to all who served on the Roadrunner teams.

Here are some of the latest links posted on our web site:

Posted 26 March 2011

[YF-12 Flight Program by Don Donohue](#) To more appreciate the accomplishments of the YF-12 Flight Test Program, I will expand on details of various operations touched on in my [BIO](#). I was notified that when I departed the Ranch, I would be returned to ADC & go to Edwards as Maintenance Officer on the YF-12. The YF's had been OUTED by President Johnson & were already in place @ Edwards. http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/yf-12_flight_program.html :

[K-9 Handlers of Groom Lake by Walt Koopman](#) The CIA interviewed and selected the mostly



Air Force K-9 handlers in Washington for Project OXCART at Groom Lake. In June of 1964, the Agency invited me to take the standard battery of tests, telling me that if selected I would be going somewhere, but they could not be told where. I was then asked if I wanted to go, but before I could answer, I was told that it did not matter as I would go where the AF wanted me. The area turned out to be a great assignment that we felt privileged and proud that the Air Force and CIA selected us. [More](http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/k9_handler_selection_groomlake.html)
http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/k9_handler_selection_groomlake.html

K-9 Handlers by Alva McMillion The OXCART legacy at the Groom Lake facilities includes the K-9 handlers and their dogs securing the area and patrolling the perimeter. Security forbade our taking photo at Groom Lake, so the photo depicts my dog, Caesar and I taken during the Cuban Crisis at Homestead AFB. We actively patrolled the air base with about 20 K-9's in 1963 while pending deployment of our group to Vietnam for securing our bases there. Our entire group was in training at that time. [More](http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/k9_handlers_groomlake.html)
http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/k9_handlers_groomlake.html

Posted 13 March 2011

Water Survival Training Charlie Trapp recalls: Our rescue-survival section tested the suits in the area pool. (A-12 pilot Ken Collins shown in the pool at "Sam's Place" Trapp is talking to one of the assistants) Casto jumped out of our C-130 pressurized at high altitude, and during our parasail program at Lake Meade. We did many things with our helicopters from construction, radar testing, and recovery of high value items dropped from the A-12. We ran a pistol range and survival training in Florida. [More](http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/parasail.html) <http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/parasail.html>



Helo Ops of Groom Lake by Charlie Trapp There I was sitting in the office of a helicopter rescue detachment in Charleston AFB SC when I got a call from Rescue HQs. "Do you want a job flying an H-43 helo at a classified location somewhere in the USA?" OK, I was looking for some new thing to do so I said yes. I asked our H-43 factory tech rep if he knew where an extra H-43 was located and he told me there was one at Nellis AFB NV .in care of the local rescue unit. My "yes" was a good one. I packed up my family--wife and two kids--and headed out west. [More](http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/helo_history.html)
http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/helo_history.html

CIA Pilot Training by Frank Murray All of the pilots selected to fly the A-12 were active duty Air Force fighter pilots prior to being transferred out of the Air Force to become civilian employees of the CIA. This transfer stipulated that the Air Force pilots were required to resign their officer commissions for the duration of their CIA involvement. This was done with the understanding that they would be reinstated into the Air Force at the end of their contract with the CIA. Their compensation and insurance programs were similar to that afforded the CIA U-2 pilots. Of the eleven pilots selected, six were still on contract with the CIA when the Reconnaissance missions of Operation BlackShield started. The training program was not a rigid curriculum, but was based on typical fighter Squadron transition steps. [More](http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/cia_pilot_training.html) http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/cia_pilot_training.html



CIA Release of A-12 Video Thank you Toni for the great job you and staff did on this video, And kudos on the great job all of you are doing at the CIA Museum. [More](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXi7LkNipdc)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXi7LkNipdc>



1129th Mission Planning Note that this Article covers a time frame late 1961 through mid-1965, as that is the time frame when I arrived and then departed the Area to run the SR-71 Blackbird program at the Recon Center at SAC Hdqrs at Omaha Nebraska. The Unit stayed intact until late 1968 having deployed and flown sorties over Viet Nam as well as other locales. Arriving at Las Vegas Nevada, I as well as others had absolutely no idea of what our assignment held in store for us. I for one thought I was being assigned to a unit stationed at Nellis AFB located at Las Vegas. http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/1129th_sas.pdf



The F-101s of Groom Lake by Don Donohue I arrived @ the Ranch in Feb 62 as maintenance officer and part of the support fleet consisting of 2 F101B's modified for Boom Refueling, one T33, one H-43 and one C180 used in the Bay of Pigs. The maintenance techs had no F-101 experience. I was the only one w/F-101 experience (Maintenance & Flying). Colonel Bob Holbury, Doug Nelson & Ray Haupt went to SC for 25 hrs of F-101 time. They brought Harold Burgeson, their instructor back w/them. I reviewed ejection procedures before the FCF. More
http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/donohue_f101.html



Bio of Bob Hughes In November 1962, volunteered to CIA Project OXCART and was selected in January 1963 for assignment to 1129th SAS in Las Vegas, Nevada as crew chief on the F-101B VooDoo plane providing support for the Top Secret A-12 Blackbird Mach 3+ surveillance plane at Groom Lake. Served two TDY tours at Kadena as crew chief on the F-101B during the operation phase of Project OXCART, Operation BLACKSHIELD, flying CIA surveillance missions over North Korea and North Vietnam. More <http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/hughes.html>



Bio of Lt. Col. Bill Thomas Thomas, while a USAF Major was assigned to the Air Force 1129th SAS contingent at Groom Lake, Nevada during the CIA Project Oxcart. Project OXCART was the building of a Mach 3+ plane capable of flying above 80,000 feet to replace the U-2 surveillance plane. Major Thomas was a member of the meteorology team at Groom Lake for the flights of the A-12 and the F-101 VooDoo support planes. Major Thomas deployed to Kadena, Okinawa during Operation Black Shield, the operational phase of Project OXCART where the A-12 flew sorties over North Vietnam to locate the SAM and surface-to-surface missiles of the enemy, and the missions over North Korea to locate the USS Pueblo seized by the North Korean navy. Major Powell resided in the Morgan Manor with the CIA project pilots and the Air Force support team, including meteorologist Weldon "Walt" King who was killed in the crash of one of the Blackshield F-101 planes. More <http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/thomas.html>



Area-51 Comes To Las Vegas by Richard Williams No wife was allowed to be told where their husbands were working or what they were working even though they were stationed at the same base. Everything was on a need to know basis and if you were not directly involved in a particular project there, you simply did not need to know anything about it. Wives knew not to ask about things and their husbands knew they would have violated their top-secret security clearances and possible jail time, because of National Security. Security people, agencies and departments that were in charge of watching the construction workers, military and civilian project workers, knew everything about everyone, because they were working on the "project" or stationed at Watertown, that would eventually be called, Area 51. More
http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/area-51_comes_to_las_vegas.pdf



Dye Bio Update I joined the CIA in October 1956. In January 1957, I joined the U-2 squadron then at Area 51, as an electronic technician in the Commo shop. After thirty days of familiarization with the program, I was assigned to the squadron in Geiblestadt, Germany. In late 1957, this squadron was disbanded and I finished my commitment to the program in A Incerlik, Turkey. More http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/dye_1.html



Don Johnson Bio Roadrunner Don Johnson, one of the 40 or so firemen that worked for Reynolds Electric & Engineering in Area 51 is to be commended for being the first of the firemen to post their bio on the website. Don worked at Area 51 from 1962 to 1965. More
http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/johnson_d.html



BGen Jerry McIlmoyle and Linda are proud to announce the publication of the second edition of *Remembering the Dragon Lady*. It is an expanded hardcover edition



Jerry McIlmoyle checking his aircraft before a flight.

with more memoirs and photos. The first edition is now out of print, but the second edition contains all the memoirs from the first book in addition to many new ones, including experiences of men of the USAF, RAF and ROCAF.

Major General (Ret.) Patrick J. Halloran (lower left) has offered the following endorsement:

Remembering the Dragon Lady is a superb book on the dramatic history of this marvelous airplane. A product of Kelly Johnson's Skunk Works, the U-2 was



acclaimed by him as one of the very high points of his engineering career. As a pilot of the U-2 for over nine years, I can attest to its challenges and rewards. I entered the program when it first came into the USAF inventory and drew immense pleasure and pride from mastering this difficult but rewarding plane and accomplishing the mission for which it was created. Readers will find this book an exciting and educational volume.



Remembering the Dragon Lady is published by Helion & Co. Ltd. in the UK. It is now available for preorder on the publisher's website at www.helion.co.uk or www.amazon.com. Gerald E. (Jerry) McIlmoyle enlisted in the US Air Force and began his pilot training in November 1951. Graduating in December 1952, he flew F-86s in Korea. Next, he became a flight commander and then assistant operations officer. Recruited into the U-2 program in 1957, he was an instructor pilot and standardization pilot; he logged 1319 hours U-2 pilot time.

More http://area51specialprojects.com/area51sp_blog/?p=187

FEEDBACK from Roadrunner member Dick Clark re Roadrunner Ham Radio Operator stories carried in the past two editions of the Roadrunner newsletter:

Hi T.D. I read the March newsletter with great interest. You outdid yourself on that one; I couldn't put it down (so to speak). I don't know if Frank mentioned to you that that's how we first met about 30+ years ago. I am N6DHD in the Ham world. I was known as the "drug hauling driver" by all of the hams that used to hang out on the old "Kingman repeater". I could access it from my home in Riverside, CA and of course, Frank could easily access it from his home in LV [More](#)



http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/roadrunner_blog/?p=218&cpage=1#comment-1145

Chris Pocock

Author, 50 YEARS OF THE U-2

www.schifferbooks.com

The death of Hervey Stockman and correspondence in the last newsletter regarding the Greek pilots who might have trained on the U-2 in 1956 prompts me to offer a few comments.



Hervey was one of the six pilots who successfully completed conversion onto the U-2 at The Ranch (aka Watertown Strip, later aka Groom Lake) between January and April 1956. They deployed to the UK as part of the CIA's Detachment A in early May 1956, but moved on to Germany for political reasons six weeks later. On 20 June, Carl Overstreet took off from Wiesbaden on the first operational mission, which flew over East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. The flight went well, and served as a test for the new film and ELINT processing and exploitation arrangements that had been set up. On 2

July, pilots Jake Kratt and Glen Dunaway flew two more missions over Eastern Europe, covering a lot more territory. [More http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/roadrunner_blog/?p=218&cpage=1#comment-1145](http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/roadrunner_blog/?p=218&cpage=1#comment-1145)

Feedback on proposed activities for our October reunion

Dear T.D.:

Meeting Suggestions:

As all the people involved are hard hitters, may I suggest a business meeting agenda, as all our time is important and limited:

1. Legacy tour speaker each morning at 9 AM
2. Speakers each morning in their area of expertise:
 - a. J-58 engine
 - b. Airframe
 - c. ECM
 - d. Fuel
 - e. Tanker support
 - f. Etc., etc.
3. Field trip as past meeting was to Nevada test site
 - a. Creech AFB
 - b. Nellis AFB
 - c. Area itself

As all of us held an advanced clearance at one time, necessary records check is possible. If money is needed to pay for bus or expenses, participants will have to pay to go on trip but a field trip is needed with a lunch included as it should take most of the day.

4. May I also suggest getting Bob Murphy to speak as he was Kelly's representative at Palmdale and was the man to make it happen.

5. I suggest that we use our time wisely and run the meeting as a business meeting and not as a social event. We all appreciate your efforts and I am sure you feel like the Lone Ranger and wonder where all your help is but maybe you should ask!

Bob Westlund
Oak Harbor, WA

Brand X

This little blurb was written ten years back by one of the first USAF SR-71 personnel to arrive at Kadena in 1968. It gives the Air Forces perspective on the USAF 1129th SAS A-12's (the Roadrunners, aka, "the spooky folks with "Brand X" (A-11) or (R-12)..." already at Kadena:

Ronald J. De Lozier, MSGT, USAF, (Ret) Writes: I noticed a lot of folks were in the program after I left in '72, so I figured I would give some recollections of what things were like in the early days at OL-8. One thing is we didn't have the "T" hanger when we first went there, it belonged to the spooky folks with "Brand X" (A-11) or (R-12), depending on who you or what you were told.



A bit of humor: The K-9 stories by Koopman and McMillion of 50 years ago provide strong justification for our getting our stories told for the sake of history and to educate the younger generations on the security dogs of our day. We have seen many changes in the military since we all served, and have to wonder what it is like at the Ranch today. For example, Sergeant



Stubby, the K-9 dog on the left represents what we proudly used in our day. Compare it to the K-9 team used today after our current Commander in Chief and the liberal house and senate decided to downsize to cut back on the cost of dog food and remove the appearance of aggression in our armed forces.

Remembering the forgotten cadre at the Ranch – The CIA security guards, finance, and commo, many lost, but not forgotten: Tom Bolich, Bob Bolich, Dick Tyler, Bob Grasso, Harry Shultz, Frank Nemetz, Jim Conway, Joe Silcoski, Bill Ross, Bill Munday, Bob Allwein, George Libby, Bill Leonue, Bill Morgan, Bill Canty, Joe Mathews, Dave Butterworth, Dave Kindell, Phil Rogers, Charlie Mease, Joe Silcoski, Joe Koaseski, Marshall Edwards, Berne Mesqueitz, Charlie Hunck, John Minnick, Vick Cibello, Al Sorrell, Al Rogers, and Paul Gosiewski. If you are or were a Roadrunner, you knew and loved Tom Bolich, affectionately referred to as "Mr. Warmth." Tom and his brother, Bob, both worked for the CIA providing security for Area 51 during Project OXCART. The very early Security Staff along with some of the Agency Admin, Finance and Commo personnel came from various backgrounds to serve as the first assigned to the Area. The government recruiter had the pleasant task of traveling thru the Northeast section of Pennsylvania, where he recruited about 25 of the 30 officers. They hung out at the Blue Danube located at the time on East Charleston in Las Vegas where they often challenged an 18 oz steak to get a second one free. Another hangout for the CIA guards was the Stardust Hotel and Casino, also the hangout of the mob. Harry Shultz's wedding attracted a few of the girls from the local ranch in addition to Charlie White, the first Security Officer assigned to the area by the agency, and his wife Betty. They often left the Ranch through the Back Way (Caliente Road) when the main road to the test site was closed due to testing. Bear in mine this was the time when the A-12 Articles were made of wood and these were the guys who brought the actual articles crated in huge boxes from Burbank in the very early sixties. The base was built around them and through them we had great success in keeping the area UNKNOWN for almost 50 years. A real tribute to each and every person that ever associated with Area 51. [More](http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/bolich/bolich.html)
<http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/bolich/bolich.html>

The local Roadrunners in Las Vegas welcomed Al Rubin, one of our Canadian members to the Officers Club at Nellis AFB for a pleasant breakfast with members of the Classic Jet Aircraft Association. The occasion provided Barnes opportunity to visit with Nellis 99th Air Base Wing Public Affairs Officer, Gene Hill concerning possible Roadrunner activities at

Nellis during our next reunion. For any of our attendees who have not enjoyed the pleasure of visiting our local base, Nellis AFB, these are the key places to visit:

¥ Threat Training Facility - Museum-like facility containing Warsaw Pact weaponry and aircraft including restored SU-7, SU-17, SU-22, MiG-29 and an immaculate MiG-23ML (or YF-113), as well as an awesome collection of tanks, SAMs, cruise missiles, tracked guns and helicopters. Of course Barnes' favorite at the "Petting Zoo" is the MiG 17 Fresco that he exploited at Groom Lake in 1969 during Project Have Drill.

¥ Thunderbird Facility - Very brief tour of most crisp and perfect facility anywhere.

¥ Flightline - Operational examples of F-22, F-15C and F-15E, an RC-135 Rivet Joint" and a couple transient F-18 and Tornado aircraft.



¥ Heritage Park - Outdoor "Gate Guard" displays of the first operational F-117, an F-86 Sabre and a couple Century Jets.

CIA Museum: Barnes reports talking to Toni Hiley, Director of the CIA Museum this week who gave him a heads up that a new website being posted in a week or so that will contain much more about the Roadrunners and the A-12 than the one presently online. Thanks, T and staff – we appreciate it.



The Flight Test Historical Foundation has announced Lockheed Test Pilot Bob Gilliland to be honored during its 2011 Excellence in Aviation Awards gala event on 14 May 2011 along with Jens K. Neelsen and Frank Robinson. The FTHF is an organization in which many of our Roadrunners are members that is raising funds for the Endowment and Relocation of the Air Force Flight Test Center Museum to the West Gate of Edwards Air Force Base. [More about Bob Gilliland](http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/gilliland.html) <http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/gilliland.html>

I worked at Area 51 from Aug 1965 thru May 1966 as a Flight Test Engineer on the A-12s. We were at the north end. I was junior to Frank "Ozzie" Osberg on article 121 initially, and then later on article 127 with Virgil Francis. Other FTE's included "Friendly" Frank Rowe. Our on-site boss was Fred Hendershot, and his boss in Burbank was Larry Bohannon, the head of ADP (Advanced Development Projects), who reported to Kelly Johnson. Our most frequent pilots were Bill Park, the chief test pilot, Art "Pete" Peterson, and Darrell Greenmyer (who I enjoyed the most). Other less frequent pilots included Jim Eastman, Bill Weaver, and Bob Gilliland. I witnessed the crash of article 126 from the base of the tower. The flames were awesome. The pilot was Mel Vojvodich as indicated; Bill Skliar was in the F-101 Voodoo chase plane. For me to have witnessed the crash, it had to have occurred between Aug 65 and Jun 66. The month and day indicated may well be correct, but the year is wrong. I have seen the wrong date in at least two places: Paul Crickmore's Lockheed SR-71 The Secret Missions Exposed, and a website detailing the locations of A-12s, YF-12s, and SR-71s. I have seen it correctly at another website called "Blackbird Losses" which indicates 28 Dec 65. Kindly stay in touch with me thru the correction process. There may be other topics we could exchange information on. Best regards, Karl Hamlin [Karl Hamlin karl.hamlin@yahoo.com](mailto:karl.hamlin@yahoo.com) Thank you, Karl. The error was on a Timeline prepared by a third party. I got it changed. Thanks for catching it. Perhaps some of our Flight Test Engineers will remember you and give you a yell.

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T.D. Barnes
President/Webmaster