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President’s Corner by Brad Wright, Covey 251

So, the newsletter is coming to you a few weeks late. I could blame maintenance or weather. However, once again, time slipped by me and our editor was taken ill at the same time. It was just a well placed curve ball that caught me looking for a change up. Apologies to all; but, the newsletter has the latest information on the reunion.

In almost all areas of the country, the spring/summer has been wet/wetter and hot/hotter. On July 11, I traveled to Phoenix to meet our USMC son and his family as they were starting their cross-country travels to NAS Patuxent River. Well, dang, it was 115 degrees in Phoenix that afternoon and even though “it’s a dry heat” the 20 MPH winds just seemed to suck the life out of me. My hope is that you and yours are withstanding the onslaught of the summer’s heat and doing well.

On to the business of the FACA. Mike Lyons has reported that FR2020 in Colorado Springs is falling into place and all seems to be moving along nicely. He has had some volunteers to help him out with several areas and we have partnered with Military Reunion Planners to assist us in the setup and planning for this reunion. A few details are provided below with more to follow in the next newsletter.

Our off-year board of directors meeting will be held in early November this year, so I will fill you in on the details of that meeting in the end of year newsletter. One of the many items we will be discussing is filling a couple of positions on board to include officers of the association. Remember, this is your association and it needs folks to step up and serve to keep it running smoothly. Contact me if you have any questions about positions and responsibilities for the slots that will need to be filled.

Over half of 2019 has flown by and I see Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas on the near event horizon. Before we know it there will be another new year to celebrate and the fun starts all over again. The reunion will be on top of us before you know it, so take a look forward and start making basic plans to attend.

I’ll close with a slow hand salute to all of our fellow warriors who have taken their last flight and wish all the best to each and every one of you for the remainder of 2019.
Cleared Hot and Hit My Smoke!!
TREASURER'S REPORT by Trey Moran, Nail 13

As of the end of July, 2019, our financial worth was $143,249:
Checking Balance - $10,896 (includes $806 remaining in the reunion and $1,328 in our historian accounts)
Savings Balance - $31,349
CD Balance - $65,190
Investment Balance - $36,341

We donated our annual contribution of $2,000 to the FAC Museum. Previously approved donations of $1,000 to the Homes For Our Troops Foundation and the Fisher House Foundation remain to be paid.

We have new FACA challenge coins. They are available from our historian, Al Matheson, for $5 ($10 for non-members), plus shipping of $5 regardless of the number of items purchased. He also has “Hit My Smoke” key chains and decals at two for $5.

To help the association save money, if you haven’t already done so, consider switching your newsletter delivery to email. We still have nearly 300 members getting the newsletter by snail-mail, costing us more than $500 each year to mail the newsletter. Just let me know and I’ll make it happen.

You can also help by keeping track of your membership by noting your status on the first line of your address on this newsletter. The first number is the last year of your membership. If you get the newsletter by email notice, you can email me or Fred Pumroy to check your membership status. If your membership is due for renewal, consider becoming a life member. In either case, make your check to FACA, Inc and send to me at PO Box 222, Polson, MT 59860. Thanks for your support. Trey Moran, Nail 13

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Last newsletter did not have a call sign for David Tawater; his call sign is Mike 51

FAC Reunion 2020: The reunion will be returning to Colorado Springs the week of September 20 – 26, 2020. Mike Lyons is leading the efforts with help from volunteers including his wife, Peggy. The schedule will be similar to other reunions with a Friday general membership business meeting, formal dinner on Friday evening, and a memorial service to close the reunion on Saturday morning. Area locations and events are being evaluated to ensure attendees will have a fun reunion. Final decisions will be made to permit publication of a full schedule for the next newsletter. So far, the options being looked at include a tour at the Wings Over the Rockies Museum (Denver) with a recently restored SEA O-2 aircraft, the new National Museum for World War II Aviation, enjoying the SEA historical interactive displays at the USAFA, and other Colorado Springs options. An activity schedule is also being established for spouses. With the help of the Military Reunion Planners, Inc., the hosting location for the reunion will be the Hotel Eleganté Conference & Event Center.

In addition to the planning schedule, the next newsletter will include registration forms to sign-up for the reunion. You will be able to preorder 2020 reunion hats and shirts. Before the end-of-the-year, each FACA member is encouraged to reach out to other FACs and encourage them to attend the reunion. You are especially encouraged to reach out FACs not currently active in the
FACA. These individuals may only learn about the reunion through your efforts. They may not
know about the reunion without you making the effort to contact them.

We all know how fast retiree schedules fill up, so planning to attend the reunion should be done
as soon as possible. With the calendar catching up to SEA vets, now is the time for SEA vets to
attend a reunion while they, their spouses, and veteran friends can also attend the reunion.
Please reach out to someone you would like to see again. The location, anticipated weather, and
planning efforts will lay the groundwork for a good reunion. Encouraging your friends to attend will
put the reunion over the top as a memorable event.

Focus on a single group of FACs by Don Davie, Nail218/Sundog101: The war in SEA was long, fought
in a wide range of locations each having unique topography, facing a capability, well equipped, and well
led enemy. Throughout this war, FACs responded to a wide range of challenges. Any combination of time,
location, and mission can provide examples of FACs performing with dedication, commitment, and
bravery. Over time, the newsletter would like to explore different mission profiles and distinct groups of
FACs. For this newsletter, the focus will be on the Ravens who clearly played a unique FAC role in SEA.
Books have been written that document the Raven mission and life style. This newsletter will just look at
the kind of men that were Ravens. Those familiar with the Ravens could identify individual Ravens that
had heroic tours, gave all for their country, or those that did great things after being a Raven. In this article,
I’m going to spotlight several Ravens I knew before they became Ravens. I believe these men are
symbolic of patriots who became Ravens.

Jim Cross: I met Jim Cross during my freshman year at Ohio University. He had the toughness and drive
honed in a blue-collar town of Warren Ohio. Jim was a well-spoken, conservative student leader on a
liberal leaning campus. He was a founder of a chapter of the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) and
served as chapter president. In AFROTC, his dedication and leadership earned him the privilege of being
the cadet wing commander. Jim was totally committed to keeping America as a bastion of freedom. He
served as a Congressional staffer on the Hill. It was clear to all that knew him; he had a solid future in
politics. Intelligent, tough, fiery, and committed, he was a patriot at a young age. He was recognized in
National press articles for his powerful and passionate speech to nominate Barry Goldwater at the mock
RNC convention held at Ohio University. Jim volunteered for the Ravens after serving his first combat tour.
A man with a clear path to success in Ohio, chose to stay in SEA as a Raven.

Charles P. Russell: Charlie “Doc” Russell was an individual with unlimited abilities/interests and a proven
ability to do whatever he attempted to accomplish. Charlie’s initially graduated from college and began a
career as a civil engineer building roads for the state of Kentucky. He changed paths and graduated from
dental school going on to serve as an Air Force dentist at Clark AFB. Charlie switched gears again
became an OV-10 pilot. He was a great FAC with a smile that could light up a room. He served the civilian
community in Thailand by providing dental services. He was always working and ready for a challenge.
With full knowledge of the demanding Raven tour duties, this man with unlimited options chose to be a
Raven.

These two men, that I personally knew before they were Ravens, illustrate the Raven mission drew very
capable people that wanted to continue flying combat. These men were warriors and patriots that flew with
similar men as Raven FACs. The pride of being a Raven is still evident in the men that have served in this
unique experience. They have unparalleled comradely, pride in their achievements, and love for their
fallen comrades. The following items illustrate Raven pride:

- The Ravens maintain an active website (Ravens.org) which posts Raven news as the news
occurs. Take a look at Ravens.org.

Raven have published multiple books about the Ravens with the definitive (verified) history in The Ravens by Christopher Robbins. The Ravens have verified each of the stories in The Ravens. Other books about the Ravens do not have validation from the Ravens.

In addition to the work of Ravens to document their history and keep their story alive, others including academics document Raven history. The following links are to documents published by Dr. Joe Leeker. Each document provides details for the different aircraft flown by the Ravens. O-1, T-28, and U-17. Names of Ravens and other FACs downed in combat are listed.

The Ravens continue to meet annually during October at Randolph AFB annually. The Raven only focus permits the maximum time the Ravens can share with their comrades.

https://utdallas.edu/library/specialcollections/hac/cataam/Leeker/aircraft/RLAF_O1s.pdf


https://utdallas.edu/library/specialcollections/hac/cataam/Leeker/aircraft/RLAF_U17s.pdf

If you wish to share a story, please submit the story to Don Davie at Nail218.dd@gmail.com I’ll try to publish all of the stories (except those that might prove too embarrassing). If we get a lot of stories, I’ll highlight each story in the printed newsletter and include the full story in the newsletter distributed by email and posted on the web site.

Stories (I’m sure they are true): Story 1. Remembering His Thoughts After Initial Mission Briefing: Bob Cadmen was an experienced aviator when he arrived at NKP. As a prior-Navigator pilot, he had flown multiple aircraft. In Buffs, he accepted that ejection seats could exit the bottom of an aircraft. In C-130s, he learned that some men prefer to jump out of perfectly good aircraft. In pilot training, he intentionally stalled aircraft to induce spins. In C-141s, he experienced performance differences between heavily loaded and lightly loaded aircraft. Upon completion of O-2 training, he looked forward to marking targets and running airstrikes. Then he had his initial mission briefing in SEA. He summarized the mission profile with the following words, “So we fly at night, drop logs to mark targets, frequently fly in the rain under IFR conditions knowing fighters cannot conduct strikes, and we get shot at by 23, 37, and 57 MM guns.” His thoughts: “YGTBSM!” Looking back, it all makes sense to him today.

Story 2. Ideal Weapon for Interdiction: While breaking down a daily FRAG order from 7/13 AF, Captain Joe Demarco cautioned me to “read the whole FRAG.” It seems that every so often, the FRAG contains more than the daily mission tasking. Joe’s specific reference was a request to submit ideas for ideal weapons to use in the war of interdiction. Responses to this query included the truck dog, gun pit dog, and jacks (from ball and jacks game). The truck dogs were to be airdropped wearing small satchel charges. The dogs were trained to eat under trucks. Find a truck and the magnetic charge damages the truck. The gun dog worked on the same principle. Airdrop dogs that eat in gun pits. The dogs are trained
that they get food when they bite the gunner. The end result would be hungry dogs in gun pits that the gunners would not occupy. The jacks were to be about three inch jacks with pointed tips. The jacks were to be dropped on the roads to cause flat tires on the trucks. None of these ideas were given consideration.

However, one suggestion generated considerable study and discussion. FACs suggested, "Drop bowling balls rather than 500 pound bombs." People began to discuss bowling balls and the discussions were insightful.

The first issue addressed was the question, "Are bowling balls lethal?" Bowlers know that if you drop a bowling ball from waist level on your foot, it is capable of breaking your toes. Dropped from higher level should give the bowling balls more power; from ten feet it will break other bones. If dropped from a high enough level, a bowling ball could kill a person or cause great damage to a vehicle. Few would argue that a bowling ball dropped from 3,500 feet could destroy a military truck. Bowling balls are lethal.

The second question raised was, "How accurate can you drop a bowling ball?" This is a complex problem compounded by the delivery platform, airspeed, altitude, and other considerations. After a lot of discussion, there was general consensus that an F4 could drop bowling balls at least as accurate as 500 pound balls. (Insert your own F4 pitching bombs story.) Relatively speaking, bowling balls are accurate.

The combination of being lethal with the able to be delivered accurately, suggested the bowling ball should be given more study. The F4 example was further explored. One would be analyst drew a circle representing the 50 meter diameter that estimated the accuracy of an F4 delivered 500 pound bombs. He marked the damage ratio for each of the (16) 500-pound bombs the F4 could deliver. He determined that there was a two percent chance that one of the 500-pound bombs could damage a truck. Another person then raised the question, "If an F4 can drop (16) 500-pound bombs, why not have it drop (500) 16-pound bowling balls?" Plotting the 500-pound projectiles within the 50 meter diameter circle indicates that any truck within the circle would be hit by one or more bowling balls. FAC AFIT trained engineer took credit for understanding the warfare principle of mass. But, the issue of how to carry the 500 bowling balls was determined to be a maintenance issue. An F4 laden with bowling balls could kill trucks.

Theoretical gaming of the bowling ball option identified other exciting facts about bowling balls. Actual experience has shown that a 500-pound dropped more than 50 meters from a truck target, will explode in the karsts and break off lime stone rocks that could be used by road crews to fill in the holes caused by the 500-pound bombs that damaged the road. Conversely, gaming showed the bowling ball would not explode. During initial use, the bowling balls would remain in the karsts and deny road repair materials to the road crews. Gaming showed that the bowling ball would adapt when used for an extended operation. After the bowling balls filled the cracks in the karsts, the bowling balls will bounce down the karsts to land on the roadway. Engineers determined that the bowling ball should be viewed as a self-correcting ordinance.

Gaming also raised the issue that because bowling balls did not explode they could be used to destroy or render anti-aircraft guns to be unusable. They noted that guns hit by bowling balls dropped from 3,500 feet would damage or destroy by the bowling balls. Also noted was the ability of the bowling balls to fill up dug in gun pits. Dropping enough bowling balls will fill up the gun pits, leaving no room for the gun crew to operate the weapon. The study designated the bowling ball as an anti-gun weapon.
Gaming showed that as self-adjusted bowling balls are initially used, the road crews would use them to pave the roads. However, extensive use of the bowling balls creates logistic problems for the road crews. The bowling balls don’t explode; they simply lie on the roads or bounce down the karsts until they reach the road. The road crews would have to do something to get the growing number of bowling balls off of the road. Initial speculation suggested the bowling balls might be thrown into the back of trucks heading south on the trail or placed on the bike handle bars of south bound bikes. This would displace the people transported in the trucks forcing them to walk south to walk south delaying their arrival about two months. Further discussions gave more respect to the North Vietnamese. Speculators noted that the North VN engineers would quickly determine that the bowling balls should be moved the shorter distance to move them out of Laos and into North Vietnam. Trucks would be emptied on the trail near the bowling ball surplus and loaded with bowling balls to be taken to North Vietnam. The bowling balls would stop the flow of supplies south to Vietnam and Cambodia.

The manpower specialists contributing to the analysis noted that the individuals loading the bowling balls into the trucks are not efficient. They suggested the efficiency would improve if loaders could pick-up bowling balls with one hand rather than two hands. Manpower specialists anticipated that North Vietnam would begin drilling holes in the bowling balls to permit the loading crews to lift the balls with one hand. The ability to quickly remove the bowling balls would be of great interest to North Vietnam, because the expanded delivery of bowling balls by aircraft other than the F4 would be possible when the guns were destroyed or the gun pits were full of bowling balls. Initially, the versatile B52 would be used to drop bowling balls. Just think rather than over 100 500-pound bombs, the B52 could drop over three thousand bowling balls. Nearly 20,000 from a six ship arc light. The C-123 aircraft could have been converted to drop bowling balls. The C-130s, C-141s, and C-5s could also deliver bowling balls after the anti-aircraft guns were silenced. Energetic FACs (in and out of South Vietnam) might enjoy dropping a few bowling balls. The bowling ball is not limited to specific types of aircraft.

The dirty trick gamers determined that after North Vietnam started to drill out the bowling balls, the Navy could drop predrilled bowling balls. After the loading crews adjusted to picking up the pre-drilled balls, the Navy could modify a portion of the balls to have Chinese finger traps in the drill holes. Eventually, workers would get their fingers stuck in the ball. The balls would have to be removed at ball removal stations established along the trail. Ball removal would logically be done with available road building equipment. It is likely that the bowling ball would be removed by breaking the ball with sledge hammers which might be rough on the hands. Loading crews would quickly notice team members with busted hands and go back to lifting the balls one at a time to avoid having their balls removed.

Using all available aircraft, the Ranch Hand could be used to spray a slick substance on the bowling balls that are waiting to be loaded by the removal crews. These crews efficiency would be greatly degraded by only picking up one ball at a time and having problems dealing with the sprayed bowling balls. Remember, a bowling ball dropped from waist level can easily break a person’s toes. The damage may be more pronounced for individuals wearing Ho Chi Min sandals. The ball removal stations might have to be expanded to include foot repairs. Bowling balls could be viewed as anti-personnel weapons.

To review, the bowling ball is a lethal weapon that may be delivered as accurately as an F4 dropped 500 pound bomb. Bowling balls are self correcting ordinance that can destroy trucks and damage or render anti-aircraft guns unusable. The bowling balls create logistics problems for the enemy that must remove the balls to clear the trails before normal truck traffic could be reestablished. Removal would reverse the flow of traffic on the trail causing the bowling balls to be removed from Laos to be dumped into North Vietnam.
Results of the initial discussions on bowling balls spread throughout the FAC community. Knowing that the bowling ball was a usable weapon, every AFIT grad flying the FAC mission voluntarily contributed to planning efforts for employment of the bowling balls. They quickly figured out it would take about eight days of F4 and B52 efforts to quiet the guns in one pass area and approximately two months to quiet the guns in all of the pass areas. Calculations determined the optimal loading for the airlift aircraft. The details included information on tradeoff studies between using 16 pound bowling balls or using lighter balls that would take up the same space blocking the trail, filling up the trucks, or occupying ground space in North Vietnam. The lighter balls could be loaded based upon the maximum allowable cabin space rather than max gross weight. A C5 could drop over 3,000 more of the lighter balls. Knowing how many bowling balls that they could carry provided the insights needed to determine how long it would take to fill up the pass areas. Estimates ranged between three to four months based upon the availability of aircraft and bowling balls.

Senior HQ staffers doubted the bowling ball plans because they did not know where the government could purchase the required number of bowling balls. FACs familiar with Cambodia identified multiple rubber plantations that could be sourced to produce the bowling balls. This makes the bowling ball a locally procured ordinance. The balls might even be made by North Vietnamese road crews that walked south looking for food. This makes the bowling ball a post-war recovery tool to establish industry and employment throughout SEA.

With all of the B52s, C-130s, C141, and C5 aircraft dropping maximum loads of bowling balls, the entire pass areas in Laos could be completely full within 42 days. With continued delivery, North Vietnam would be literally covered with bowling balls within six months. The rice fields would no longer produce rice because of the bowling balls. North Vietnam would be forced to dump the bowling balls into the ocean. Navy mine sweepers could collect the bowling balls for reuse. This capability makes the bowling ball the first lethal weapon that could be recycled without extensive repairs and retrofit. It also requires North Vietnam to have their entire population abandon wartime duties and support bowling ball removal efforts.

The senior leadership at 7/13 Air Force questioned the bowling ball theory. Their main concern was the fact that they did not personally use bowling balls during World War II attacks on German or Japan. The plan also suffered because use of bowling balls was initially suggested from young officers that were actually flying combat. The leaders knew that responsibility for weapons and tactics did not belong at the unit level. One senior official was quoted as saying, “I think these guys believe we can win the war.”

So now you have seen the capabilities of the bowling ball: lethal, self-correcting, anti-gun, logistical nightmare in the target area, locally sourced, recyclable, and low cost ordinance capable of shutting down North Vietnam in about six months. On the surface the bowling ball would work. Concepts of implementation were cautiously forwarded to the Pentagon over theater leadership concerns. However, President Nixon personally rejected the plan for fear of newspaper stories about the ball removal stations in Laos and the potential headline, “US BALLS HANOI.” A sound, fully-developed, unit level suggestion was not implemented because of senior leadership concerns and political considerations. So the war lingered on……
Contact specific Association officers or directors by going to our website:  http://www.fac-assoc.org/contacts/contacts01.html

Annual dues are $20. Life membership dues depend on your age:

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Enclosed is my check # _________________ for $ _________________. Make me a member or continue my membership in the FAC Association. (Note: Your Dues Status can be found in the address block printed above.)

Current Dues Status:  
Signature:  

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**FAC Association Membership and Annual Dues Form**

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