

Welcome new members!



Fall 2024

THE RAIDER CHRONICLES



IN THIS ISSUE



WHEN I SERVED: CURT
BEDKE

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FEATURE ARTICLE: LESSONS HARD-
LEARNED AS A FAC, PART II

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LIBERAL EDUCATION
in the
SERVICE ACADEMIES

WILLIAM E. SIMONS
Major, United States Air Force

PUBLISHED FOR THE
INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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BUREAU OF PUBLICATIONS
Teacher's College, Columbia University

BOOK REVIEW

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ABOUT US

THE AFHF Newsletter is a quarterly e-mail newsletter by the Air Force Historical Foundation, a private non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the history and traditions of American air and space capabilities.

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President's Corner



It's hard to believe it's fall already! As usual, this issue is packed with fun, facts, and photos brought to you by our membership. Whether this is the first time you've heard some of the information in this issue or the stories are bringing back memories, I think you'll agree that *The Raider Chronicles* is perfect for an evening read curled up in front of a fire.

Many thanks to our contributors this month: Curt Bedke, Phil Meilinger, Paul Tibbets, Darrel Whitcomb, Scott Willey, and a special thanks to Don Bishop, who provides a look back at a classic from the 1960s for this month's book review. And as always, we love input and feedback from our readers, so please don't hesitate to reach out to us at newslettereditor@afhistory.org!

Announcements

- **The 2025 AFHF Annual Symposium and Banquet will be May 21-22 in the DC area. Registration begins on November 1!** [Learn More](#)
- **Check out our latest podcast with Gen. Ron Fogleman and Mrs. Natalie Crawford as they discuss *New World Vistas*, the 1995 Technology Forecast that looked forward thirty years to the future of the USAF and Space Force.**

[Click for podcast](#)

[Learn more about
New World Vistas on
page 5](#)

Quiz



Courtesy National Museum of the USAF

What was the official “nickname” of the original AC-47 gunship?

- a. Ghost rider
- b. Spectre
- c. Spooky

See the answer on the last page of the newsletter.

Fun/First Photo of the Month

A section dedicated to photos of first flights of aircraft/spacecraft and fun air & space events



This photo was taken in May of 1998 during a flight in the B-29 FIFI over west Texas. On the left is Brig. Gen. Paul W. Tibbets, Jr. (USAF, Ret), pilot of the ENOLA GAY and commander of the 509th Composite Group. On the right is then-Capt. and now retired Brig. Gen. Paul W. Tibbets IV, who commanded the 509th Bomb Wing, the successor to the 509th Composite Group, 71 years after his grandfather!

(Photo courtesy of Paul W. Tibbets IV collection)

**Submit quiz ideas or suggested photos to
newslettereditor@afhistory.org**

Lessons Hard-Learned as a Forward Air Controller -- Part II

Darrel Whitcomb

Continued from last issue ...

Close air support (CAS)

All FACs were trained and equipped to conduct rescue operations, and almost all of us were an on-scene-commander (OSC) at least once on our tours. I learned that this capability was critical to our overall mission because our aircrew members were highly trained and costly to replace, and they were highly exploitable by our enemy. But more importantly, by this late stage of the war, it was clear that our nation was retreating from the war, and our airpower was covering that retreat. Nobody wanted to be the last guy shot down or the last POW. Consequently, when somebody went down, we scrambled our best assets, the “Sandy” A-1s (later, A-7Ds) and the HH-53 “Jolly Greens” to fly into “harm’s way” to bring our guys home. Some veterans have claimed that the “war would stop for a SAR.” I don’t believe that because the tempo of our larger combat operations was unrelenting, and our enemy took advantage of any pause in our operations. But some of the SARs were massive multi-day battles with literally hundreds of airstrikes and participants. FACs were players in many of these events. We would be working a flight when someone was shot down, or hear an emergency call on the UHF radio “Guard” frequency and would divert to the downed aircraft’s location to initially serve as the OSC until the rescue task force arrived. Then, we stood by to provide support to the focused rescue operation as the Sandys needed.

I don’t know if it was luck or planning, but all U.S. military aircraft in the theater had a UHF radio with a “Guard” auxiliary receiver. Consequently, in an emergency, it was possible to contact just about anybody very quickly to do what needed to be done. Many combat crew



An OV-10 in Southeast Asia. Courtesy Darrel Whitcomb.

were rescued through the timely use of “Guard” frequency, many by U.S. Army, Navy, or Air America helicopters who just happened to be in the area and heard the plaintive call. From this, I learned that the simplest expedients are sometimes the most effective.

Preventing mid-air collisions

This could be a real challenge because when the fighters arrived, they had to be quickly briefed on the tactical situation below so that they could properly deliver their ordnance. This meant that they would be looking at the ground as the FAC briefed them on enemy and friendly locations, as well as any necessary run-in restrictions. To prevent a collision, we would require the fighters to report visual contact with us, confirmed by a wing rock, and then we would generally restrict the fighters to an altitude above until it was time to deliver ordnance. We FACs would then position our aircraft so that we could clearly see the fighters as they delivered their weapons, holding final clearance to release until we could determine that they were running in as desired.

Additionally, we would position our aircraft so that we would not be at the fighter's 12 o'clock position as he pulled up from his delivery. We did this because we knew that any good fighter pilot would be looking back over his shoulder to see if his ordnance hit the target as he was pulling up. The safety concern here was self-evident.

I violated this rule one day in early December 1972 with almost disastrous results. I was flying an O-1 over the Plain of Jars in northern Laos when the pilot of a USAF A-7D checked in on my assigned radio frequency. He had just lost his flight lead over North Vietnam, was low on fuel, and needed a target to expend his ordnance before returning to base. OK. So, I had some trucks below and briefed him for the strike. He sounded a bit shaken up and asked me to hurry so he could proceed back to Korat. I cleared him in to strike the target. I could see that I would be in front of him as he pulled off and instructed him to come off with a hard turn to the left—behind me—so that we could not conflict. He acknowledged, rolled in, and delivered his bombs on the trucks. As he pulled up, though, he went into a hard right turn. I saw it and determined that we would be clear. However, a few moments later, he remembered my instructions and came back hard left and on a collision course with my aircraft. I could see directly down his intake and screamed at him on the radio to “pull hard” as I pushed my control stick full forward. His A-7 roared directly over my aircraft. I don't know how close it was, but I remember immediately smelling his exhaust. I had the windows of my O-1 open, and the negative Gs caused my flight kit, code cards, and maps to fly out the window. We had a one-way conversation on the radio as he headed south.

The next day, I discussed this with my fellow Ravens. We were working more frequently with the USAF A-7Ds and I did not want a repeat of this event. Unfortunately, I was not successful in that effort. Three weeks later, another Raven, Capt Skip Jackson, was working in an O-1 in almost the same area with a flight of A-7s and had a mid-air collision with one of the jets. The A-7 pilot ejected and was captured by North Vietnamese forces below. He was released and returned home three months later. Skip Jackson was killed, and his remains were never found or returned. From this, I discerned that the laws of physics are immutable. I wish, to this day, that Skip had come home, too.

These are a few of the things that I learned back in my youthful days as a forward air controller in Southeast Asia.



An airborne OV-10. Courtesy Darrel Whitcomb.

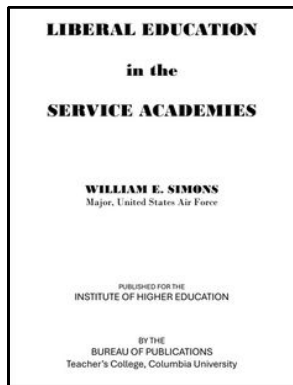
*Col. Darrel D. Whitcomb, USAFR (Ret.), served three tours in Southeast Asia as a cargo pilot and forward air controller and flew A-10s in the 1980s. His most recent book is *Moral Imperative: 1972, Combat Rescue, and the End of America's War in Vietnam*.*

New World Vistas: The Thirty Year 1995 Technology Forecast for the US Air Force and US Space Force

On November 10, 1994, SECAF Dr. Sheila Widnall and CSAF Gen. Ronald Fogleman asked the USAF Scientific Advisory Board to look into the future of air, space and computational technology and create a broad, forward-looking study in one year. Dr. Widnall's challenge was powerful: **“...this is not another Air Force internal requirement scrub to justify the Air Force science budget. Rather, it should be a truly independent futuristic view of how the exponential rate of technology change will shape the 21st Century Air Force.”** The goal was publication in December 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of *Toward New Horizons*, Dr. Theodore von Kármán's report that guided air forces into a technologically advanced world. On December 15, 1995, *New World Vistas* was delivered during holiday celebrations near Dr. Widnall's office in the Pentagon. Today, the contents of that S&T report are largely forgotten, but they should not be. Contained within the volumes are forecasts for the evolution of hypersonic technology, unmanned weaponry and refueling possibilities, command and control consolidation, 3D-command centers and much, much more. The Air Force Historical Foundation's latest podcast presents Gen. Fogleman and Mrs. Natalie Crawford, Chair of the Attack Panel, who recount the creation of NWV, its impact, and its failures.

Book Review

Donald M. Bishop



New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1965; xii + 230 pages, foreword by Edward L. Katzenbach, introduction by Earl J. McGrath. Out of print.

Six decades ago, Air Force Maj. William E. Simons (1928-2018, USNA '50, USAFA faculty 1958-1962) wrote this admired survey of education at the service academies. It is still valuable, for the issues he raised are still relevant when the education of future Air Force and Space Force officers is discussed.

Preparing the volume, Simons studied reports by Academy superintendents, deans, and committees, histories, catalogs, essays, Congressional hearings, and evaluations by Boards of Visitors since the early 19th century. There are both changes and continuities in all institutions, so reading his compact summaries of the development of education at West Point, Annapolis, the Revenue Cutter Service schools (later the Coast Guard Academy), and the Air Force Academy in chapters 3 and 6 would be of value to any officer or civilian professor assigned to a service academy faculty.

Simons introduced the great names—Sylvanus Thayer, George Bancroft, Stephen Luce, Douglas MacArthur, Maxwell Taylor, and Hubert Harmon among them. Even now, for instance, one can feel some of the legacy of the “Thayer System,” pioneered in the early years at West Point, at each twenty-first century academy. The author related changes in academy curricula after the Civil War, World War I, and World War II.

Simons also detailed the fuller sweep of academic issues when each academy was founded and during each half century. Controversies over the core curricula. The balance between vocational (or professional) vs. liberal education, expressed in debates over

mathematics, science, and engineering, on one hand, and social sciences and humanities, on the other. Recitation and grading. How the curriculum provided for advanced (or less advanced) cadets and midshipmen. Admissions. (For decades Congress blunted demands for higher admissions standards because cadets from the South and West were less well prepared.) Academic majors, curriculum enrichment, and accelerated courses. Textbooks and study guides. Military vs. civilian faculty. The role of Boards of Visitors. How accreditation, beginning in the 1930s, set changes in motion.

Here and there the text is enlivened when Simons provided amusing examples of oldthink, such as the Naval Academy’s superintendent in 1937 stating, “I can say without hesitation in my opinion success or failure in battle with the fleet is in no way depending upon a knowledge of biology, geology, ethics, social science, the literature of foreign languages or the fine arts.”

In the final chapter, there are useful reviews of the use of small sections, recitation, lectures and demonstrations, evaluations and examinations, and lab methods in the teaching of liberal subjects. Simons usefully drew on the thinking of Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz on the military profession, and there are valuable tables on the core curricula at different academies in different eras.

Simons captured the intellectual debates of the USAF Academy’s first decade, which resonate even in today’s curriculum. Cheating scandals, the Vietnam War, the enlargement of military studies, and accreditation reviews would impact the future curriculum. The later scholarship of Douglas Kennedy and Elliott Converse, Malham Wakin, and Philip D. Caine described them.

In 2018, when a former USAF Academy superintendent wrote an introduction to a study of Permanent Professors, he wrote, “I only wish I should have been able to read it as part of my preparation . . . as Superintendent.” For all who lead and serve at the Academies, reading Simons’ book would be equally valuable.

Donald M. Bishop is a Distinguished Fellow at the Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Future Warfare, Marine Corps University. He taught history at the USAF Academy before serving 31 years in the Foreign Service.

[Click here to see books by AFHF members](#)

Member Spotlight

Col. Scott A. Willey, USAF (Ret.)



Military background or connection: Retired Air Force colonel, served 1968-1995.

Why I joined AFHF: After I retired, a friend suggested that I review books for the foundation. I did and found that then-*Air Power History* was a fantastic source for aerospace history. The information fit right in with my docent and restoration/collections work at the National Air and Space Museum.

Favorite military history book: *My B-29 Story: A Top Gunner's World War II Experiences*, by Roger Sandstedt. A well-written story from an enlisted man's perspective of a superb aircraft and his service before and during the war. Reviewed in *Air Power History* Spring 2005.

Current project: I started reviewing books in 1996. In Feb 2002, I was asked to take on the volunteer job of Book Review Editor for a year or two until the Foundation could find someone. I guess they did. Nearly 23 years later, I'm still on the job, having published 1750 reviews to date.



When I Served

Maj. Gen. Curtis M. Bedke, USAF (Ret.)



Unit: 2 Bombardment Squadron, Heavy

Unit dates: Activated originally Feb 1, 1940, inactivated Mar 20, 1963. Reactivated Mar 20, 1963, inactivated Oct 1, 1982.

Dates I served in unit: Jan 7, 1980 – Oct 1, 1982

My unit memories: It's true what they say about always having a special place in your heart for your first operational airplane and assignment. The B-52Ds at March AFB in southern California were all Vietnam combat veterans, and so were the senior crewmembers in the squadron. These were the oldest B-52s—'tall tails' with the 'big belly' mods—and when you hit the water injection to add thrust to each of your eight engines in a multi-ship Minimum Interval Take-Off (MITO), the exhaust was so black you literally couldn't see the aircraft in front of you.

As a young copilot, it was an exciting time; the Cold War was real, we could carry 108 500-pound bombs, and we learned combat flying from real combat flyers and planners. We flew Busy Observer missions to locate and track Soviet ships; we deployed to England to fly Busy Brewer missions, often flying along the Soviet border to collect information and be a show-of-force. On one mission, we flew into the Gulf of Sidra to let Qaddafi know that he couldn't arbitrarily take international waters. Several times we flew missions over the North Pole just to let folks know we were still paying attention.

My most cherished memories are of being a member of a tight crew: the high-adrenaline focused pacing of a bomb run, maneuvering to avoid SAMs but still dropping on time, on target; feeling like we were the best crew ever. I bet most of my buddies felt the same way with their own crews!

Current unit status: Inactive



Fun Facts

Phil Meilinger

In the early 1930s the commercial airline industry was responsible for delivering mail around the US. In 1933, however, it was discovered that fraud was involved in the letting of these very lucrative airmail contracts. President Franklin Roosevelt therefore cancelled all these contracts until they could be renegotiated; until then the Army Air Corps would fly the mail.

Roosevelt had been given assurances from the Air Corps chief, Maj Gen Benjamin Foulois, that his airmen could handle the chore, but he would need some time to prepare. He got ten days.

The Air Mail Operation of 1934 was an unhappy experience for the Air Corps. It had not the aircraft, the all-weather instrumentation, or the trained pilots to fly at night, in foul weather and over unfamiliar terrain. There were 66 crashes and 13 fatalities in the scant three months that the operation lasted. One incident from that ordeal is of interest.

A Texas-based instructor pilot moved to the Midwest to fly the mail, launched into a wintry night, and soon encountered severe icing conditions near South Fork, Pennsylvania. Unable to maintain altitude, he began scanning for an emergency landing site. After circling for a few minutes he saw someone below waving a light alongside a snow-covered field. He decided to take a chance and set down near the light, rolling to a stop without mishap. The man with the lantern came over to the plane, and when he held up the light to look at the pilot exclaimed: "Why, Captain Vandenberg, you don't remember me, but you were the check pilot who washed me out of pilot training a month ago! I just came up to this mountain to get away from it all and write a book. When I heard a plane circling overhead I knew it was in trouble and came out to have a look."

It was a good thing. The young man had probably just saved the life of Hoyt S. Vandenberg, who would later command the Ninth Air Force during World War II and become the Air Force chief of staff in 1948.

It truly is a small Air Force!

Dr. Phillip S. Meilinger served 30 years in the USAF as a command pilot, Pentagon staff officer, Dean of the School of Advanced Airpower Studies, and professor at both the Naval Air War College and the Air Force Academy.

Submissions

This is your newsletter; we need content from you!

Please send submissions to newslettereditor@afhistory.org

Feature Articles: 1,000 - 1,200 words. Submit full articles or ideas to editor.

Book Reviews: Less than 500 words. In addition to traditional airpower and aviation history books, we welcome young adult and children's books with aviation themes.

Ask a Researcher: Submit questions or let us know if you would like to answer questions.

Member Spotlight: Answer the four questions and submit. All AFHF members are eligible.

When I Served: Answer the five questions and submit. We are interested in anyone who has served or is serving in any USAF or USSF unit at any time.

Quiz Answer: c. Spooky