



# 3<sup>rd</sup> BOMB GROUP NEWSLETTER



AUGUST 2007

## 19<sup>th</sup> Reunion in Durango, Colorado

Veterans, family and friends of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group gathered in Durango, Co. for the 19<sup>th</sup> reunion, hosted by the *89<sup>th</sup> Attack Squadron Association*. The reunion was held from May 23 – 27, at the Marriot Hotel in Durango. The reunion was hosted by Fred Klatt Jr, Margaret Klatt, Fred Klatt III and Jene Klatt. We all recognize their very fine effort in putting forth this great reunion. What follows is a recap from host chair, Fred Klatt III...

**SPRINGTIME IN THE ROCKIES!** That conjures up images of sparkling creeks, wildflowers everywhere and warm, sunny days. It doesn't always work out that way, as members attending the 19<sup>th</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Attack Group reunion in Durango, Colorado can attest!

Wednesday, May 23 found 40+ folks attending the annual (and 2<sup>nd</sup> to last) reunion arriving at the Marriott Hotel in a cold, cloudy high-altitude drizzle. The unexpected weather was soon forgotten, however, in the re-kindling of old friendships, the camaraderie and a lot of laughter that started immediately upon arrival. Fred (Jr.) and Margaret Klatt manned (and ladies?) the registration/reception room and offered a warm welcome to attendees as they checked into their hotel. Since Joe Long didn't arrive early in the day, the bar was not open until mid-afternoon but Joe made up for his later arrival in short order; spirits flowed and everybody immediately got into a festive mood...no one even noticed the weather outside! A lit fireplace in the reception area, old friends and their families, lots of gab....the reunion was off to a great start!

Durango, Colorado is at an altitude of 6600 feet in Southwestern Colorado. Located on the Animas River, Durango became the rail center of a booming mining area in the 1890's and the legacy of narrow gauge railroads remains to this day. Skiing in the winter and tourism in the summer adds to the allure of this little town, and the Memorial Day weekend, busy all by itself, was made even wilder with the annual Iron Horse bicycle race, with over 3000 people competing as they raced the old train from Durango to Silverton (the train always loses the race!). The locale for the reunion differed from most earlier get-togethers as there is no military presence at all, no air museums, no installations, no warbirds. No complaints were heard, however, about the lack.

The Marriott provided comfortable rooms and excellent service levels. They virtually gave the reunion full rein in utilizing their reception area, and this cozy room received a lot of use by everyone throughout the day, after sightseeing and excursions, and provided a fine breakfast and even some unexpected snacks in the evenings, in addition to being the site of Board and General Membership meetings.

Thursday morning brought the first excursion, a trip to Mesa Verde National Park, about 50 miles from Durango. Two 15 passenger vans along with several private vehicles toured the ancient cliff dwellings, pit homes and the Park museum, followed by lunch at a Park restaurant. The weather forecast was for improving weather and for once, they got it right! The storm from the day before provided fresh snow on the mountains, and contrasted with the blue skies to make for beautiful viewing from the winding road in and out of the Park. A bit chilly, but that didn't stop folks from burning a lot of film...actually mainly digital cameras & video cameras got a lot of use!

A midafternoon return to the hotel reopened the Hospitality room, with more war stories and reminiscing. The evening was open, and most returned to the room after dinner on their own.

The next morning (Friday) brought a mass movement to the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad depot. We were fortunate to have a private parlor car (the "Alamosa")

for our own use at the very end of the train, and more than ½ of the "Vistadome" car immediately in front of the Parlor Car. The unusual car had it's own bartender and narration, and a lot of movement between the two cars was evident. The railroad (narrow gauge, 3' wide, made for easier access into the high mountains) travels the 45 miles to Silverton in under 4 hours, and uses authentic coal burning locomotives 80 to 100 years old to pull the old cars. The route follows the Animas River into some of the most beautiful country in Colorado, over tall bridges and deep gorges and through areas of snow still remaining from the winter storms. Every one brought jackets, and again, 100's of pictures were taken. Upon arrival in Silverton, the 9000' elevation had everyone huffing and puffing, and moving at a leisurely pace to their choice of lunch spots. Silverton is a "real" town, pretty much as it was at the turn of the century, and allowed a lot of sightseeing and shopping before the return to Durango on a private bus. The Henebry's even loaded up on some fantastic pies in Silverton, which they shared with everybody that evening. A really fun, if tiring, day, and everyone was transported back to the hotel by the vans...where many took a welcome nap! The evening brought more carousing in the hospitality room when the energy levels came back up, and it was pretty obvious every one was having a good time.

The next day, Saturday, was purposely designed as a day of rest and leisure. Some folks went 4 wheeling, some went river rafting and others just went shopping in downtown Durango. A Board meeting was held, followed by a General Membership meeting (reported elsewhere in this newsletter), and an impromptu luncheon of barbeque ribs, smoked turkey, pork loin, beans and potato salad was enjoyed in the reception area. More kibitzing & history re-writing followed, lots of great stories and many memories of Group members no longer present. The promised fair weather finally arrived and it was a beautiful day.

Saturday evening brought the final banquet at Christina's Restaurant where attendees enjoyed a fine meal (and some enjoyed complimentary drinks!). During the evening, President Bill Beck recognized the Board Members & the folks who keep the

The Keynote speaker was General Ron Fogleman, 4 star general who retired from the USAF on 1 September 1997 after thirty-four years of active commissioned service. On his final tour of duty General Fogleman served as the 15<sup>th</sup> Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. From 1992 until 1994 he was Commander in Chief of the U.S. Transportation Command (CINCTRANS). As Chief of Staff, he served as the senior uniformed officer responsible for the organization, training and equipment of 750,000 active duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian forces serving in the United States and Overseas. As a member of the JCS, he served as a military advisor to the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council and the President.

General Fogleman lives in Durango, and he absolutely wowed the group with a recap of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group from its' formation to the present time, in all the different incarnations over the years. He actually was stationed for a time with the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and gave some memorable reviews of his experiences...you would not believe what happened to

him while on a strafing run in Viet Nam! He closed his talk by asking each of the members present to briefly recap their war experiences, their state of mind, their thoughts on their service experience and it made for a splendid review of what these guys did, and continue, to do. Apparently this has never happened before, and to this attendee, was sobering and enlightening...long overdue! General Fogleman gave just a great speech, and provided a very human touch to the banquet.

More informal evening get-togethers at the reception room; you could tell people just didn't want to "pack it in", but as all good things do, the end rolled around. Up early the next morning for those who were on the early morning flights or had early departure schedules.

The hosts for this event, Fred Klatt (Jr.) and Margaret, and Fred Klatt (III) and Jene', are in full agreement with those who felt this was a fine reunion. While it may be the next-to-last reunion, it was packed with wonderful people who share a common history from a troubled, but heroic, time.

We look forward to seeing you all in Texas next year!

Fred III

**From:** 'Fred or Jene Klatt' <klatvl@frontier.net>

**Sent:** Tue May 29 12:22

Hi, Gentlemen:

Hope everyone made it home okay, and with no problems. The reunion made for a pretty special Memorial Day for me, and the events at our local cemetery by the Vet groups was more meaningful than ever. I had a wonderful time at the reunion, I hope you did too.

I also got a nice email from Christina's Restaurant, thanking us & remarking what a great group attended the banquet. They didn't mention the "free" drinks, so I guess we're in the clear in that area.....